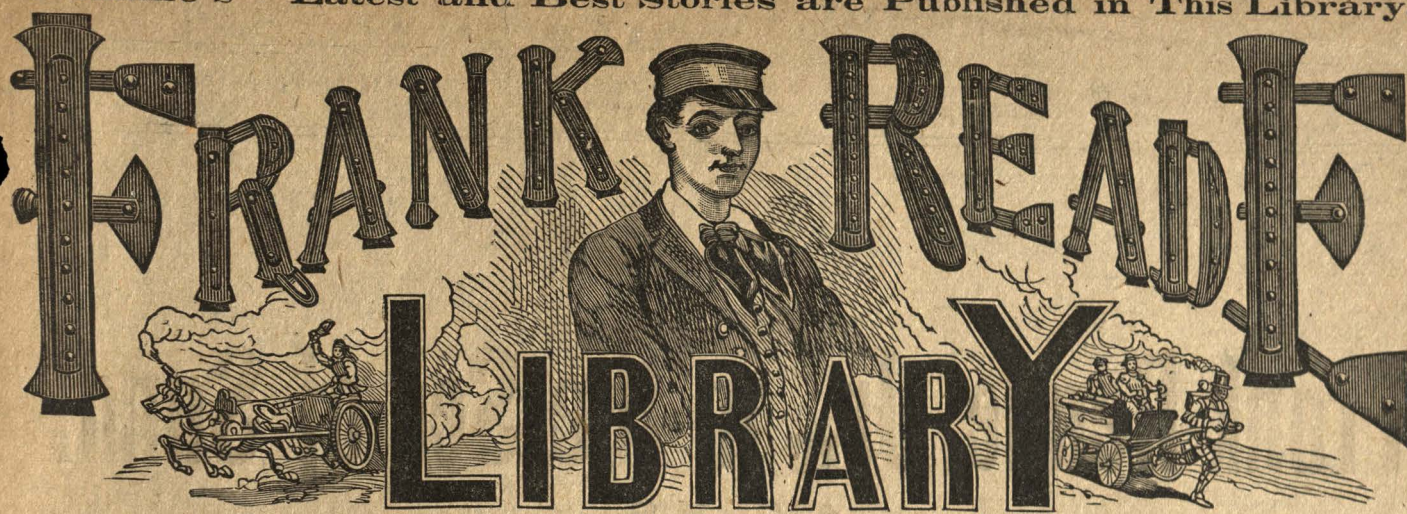


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Frank Reade, Jr.,

IN THE SEA OF SAND  
AND HIS DISCOVERY OF A LOST PEOPLE.

By "NONAME."



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# Frank Reade, Jr., in the Sea of Sand:

## AND HIS DISCOVERY OF A LOST PEOPLE.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., and His Electric Air Yacht; or, The Great Inventor Among the Aztecs," etc.

### CHAPTER I.

#### HOW FRANK MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

THE mightiest results often hinge upon the most trivial of happenings. Empires have been overthrown and bloody wars have been caused by the most unimportant of rumors, the mistake not being realized until after the irreparable damage was inflicted. A breath, a light word, a thoughtless deed, will change one's whole life destiny in many cases. This is a fact beyond dispute.

No person on earth was better aware of this fact than Frank Reade, Jr., the wonderful inventor, whose fame was world wide. Yet as he wended his way through one of Chicago's principal streets one day a few years ago, he did not dream that within the short space of an hour all his plans would be changed and his destiny shaped anew.

He had been living quietly for some time at his beautiful home in Readestown. His life thus far had been an active one, but he had now decided to indulge in a few years of much needed rest.

How his plans fell short of consummation we shall see.

Of all the people whom he met and passed on that thoroughfare, and who jostled him at every corner, there probably was not one in every hundred but had heard of Frank Reade, Jr., yet none recognized the quiet, square-shouldered young man with the stately walk as the world famous inventor.

So Frank walked on until suddenly he came into a public square.

He was on his way to the Van Buren street depot to take a train for home.

The square was filled with a mighty crowd of people. They were cheering and applauding a couple of men who, perched upon a box in a wagon, were making speeches. It needed but a second glance for Frank to understand the situation.

It was a Socialistic gathering, and the inflammatory orators were inciting the people to rise against monopoly. The crowd was vastly excited and cheered lustily.

Frank would no doubt have passed on without giving the speeches much hearing had it not been for a thrilling happening.

Suddenly from side streets a squad of blue-coated police appeared. They charged down upon the crowd with their clubs and strove to disperse it. What followed was all in quick order.

There were loud cries and the sound of blows. The officers were battling with the mob. Suddenly an object was hurled through the air and fell in the center of the blue-coated squad.

It was a bomb. A tremendous explosion followed. Several of the officers were laid dead and mangled in the streets. It was the signal for battle.

The crowd, driven back by the officers, who were now reinforced, surged about Frank Reade, Jr., and he speedily found himself unable to move or extricate himself.

Thus jammed in the struggling mass he was suddenly seized by the collar. Powerful arms jerked him backward, and he felt manacles slipped on his wrists.

"I know him. He is one of the ringleaders," a voice shouted close by Frank's ear. "Take him to the rear."

Frank was now in the midst of the police squad. Two powerful blue coats were rushing him towards the black patrol wagon which stood near. In an instant the young inventor's temper flamed up. This was an outrage and he would have satisfaction.

The idea that he, an inoffensive citizen, should be thus scandalously arrested and roughly handled in the streets of Chicago, was too much for Frank's usually placid temper. He struggled and cried angrily.

"Let go of me, you blockheads. You have made a mistake. I am no anarchist. I am Frank Reade, Jr. Let me go, I say."

But the officers were inexorable. One of them shook a club before his face and said, ominously:

"If ye don't be civil, I'll subdue ye with this."

The threat would have had little effect upon the courageous young inventor but for an incident.

He chanced to glance up and see an exceedingly well-dressed young man being hustled along to the Maria in just the same manner. He was fully as infuriated as Frank Reade, Jr., himself.

"You confounded idiot," the other was shouting, "what are you arresting me for? Don't you know the difference between a gentleman and a ruffian? But that's your style. Arrest the innocent man and let the guilty one go. Let go of me, I say. I am Washington Whitwell, I'd have you know."

But the inexorable minions of the law evidently knew and cared as little about Washington Whitwell as they did about Frank Reade, Jr. Without any ceremony they were thrust into the Black Maria with others, the door closed and away the vehicle went to headquarters.

The appearance and manner of Washington Whitwell made quite an impression upon Frank Reade, Jr.

He was convinced that he was no ordinary person. Had it not been as black as Erebus in the wagon he would have sought his acquaintance.

But the wagon now came to a halt, the doors were opened and the manacled prisoners were led out and into the presence of the police clerk for registration.

The moment Washington Whitwell entered the police station he began to berate his captors and censure their stupidity. This had no effect upon the police though.

As chance had it, Frank was the first to be led up for registration. "What is your name?" asked the clerk, gruffly. "Full name, please."

"Frank Reade, Jr. I wish to be admitted to bail at once."

The clerk gave a violent start and raised his head. The recognition was mutual. Frank knew the clerk as a former resident of Readestown.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the famous inventor. "If it is not Jack Henderson."

"Mr. Reade!" gasped the young clerk. "How is it that you are arrested?"

Explanations followed. Frank was identified on the spot, and thus narrowly escaped being incarcerated in a cell. All this while Washington Whitwell, with mouth wide open, stood by a close listener. Now he exclaimed:

"Am I dreaming, or is this Frank Reade, Jr., the famous inventor of the air-ship, known all over the world?"

"It is," replied Frank, modestly, as he submitted to having his manacles unlocked. "It seems that we are in the same box, sir."

"Ay, through the stupidity of these policemen," cried Whitwell, in a disgusted way. "But you are fortunate. I have no one to identify me."

Frank felt sure that this man was not one of the rioters, so to save time and trouble he determined upon a ruse to effect his release.

"Sh!" he exclaimed in a low voice. "Be cool and I'll help you out of your fix. What is your name?"

"Washington Whitwell."

Frank stepped up to the desk and explained Mr. Whitwell's situation to Henderson, the clerk.

"Then you identify the gentleman?" asked the latter.

"I do," replied Frank.

"Take off the handcuffs, sergeant."

The order was obeyed.

Washington Whitwell walked out of the police station with Frank Reade, Jr. He expressed his gratitude in warm terms. Frank looked at his watch and found that his train was gone.

He would be compelled to wait over until the next day. Whitwell freely expressed his mind upon the subject and wound up with:

"Well, perhaps they are no worse here than in other countries. Indeed when I was in Beloochistan two years ago I was arrested and served ten days for smoking a cigar on the steps of a temple."

"Then you are a traveler?" asked Frank.

"Well, somewhat!" replied Whitwell. "I am twenty-eight years old and I have traveled since I was twelve years of age. There is not a corner of the globe to which I have not penetrated."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Frank, with interest.

"I have mastered seven different languages and as many dialects. I am at home on the Steppes of Tartary, at the Antipodes or in the frozen valleys of Greenland, the Sea of Sand or—well, name any corner of the globe and I'll tell you all about it."

"The Sea of Sand!" exclaimed Frank. "I never heard of that locality before."

"Oh, yes, you have," replied Whitwell. "It is a name many travelers give to the southern part of the Great Sahara. There the desert gradually merges into Central Africa, and few men of our color have ever penetrated to those regions."

"I confess that I never have," replied Frank. "Although I have traveled across the desert and over Africa, but not the part you mention."

"Ah, I had forgotten," cried Whitwell, with sudden inspiration. "We are brother travelers, are we not? But you have the advantage. With your air ship you can go where white man could not penetrate on foot."

"Do you like to travel?"

"It is my life."

"Do you do nothing else?"

"Nothing. You see I fell heir to a million dollars when I was twelve years old. I always hated school, yet I loved to learn. But my knowledge is acquired by experience and observation."

Frank Reade, Jr., thought he had never met with a stranger specimen of human nature in all his life. Yet he was very deeply interested in this man.

"I was a slave among the Bedouins for two years," continued Whitwell. "In that time I suffered much and learned a good deal. Ah, that is a country I would much like to visit—with a conquering army, that region beyond the Sea of Sand."

He checked himself as a sudden swift inspiration struck him, he came to a halt and faced Frank Reade, Jr., bringing his hands together forcibly.

"By Jupiter! I have it," he cried. "It is a famous plan."

"A plan?" exclaimed Frank. "What do you mean?"

"I cannot elaborate it here," cried Washington Whitwell consulting his watch. "But I shall feel it the greatest honor I have ever received, if you will grant me the pleasure of your company at dinner. I stop at the Grand Pacific Hotel."

It seemed to Frank Reade Jr., at first like too close intimacy with a stranger. But Whitwell was so polite and earnest that the great inventor finally yielded his assent.

Scarcely had he done so, when he heard a great clattering of feet behind him. Glancing over his shoulder he saw two men racing down the street. One was white and the other black. The features of the Hibernian were unmistakable in one and of the Ethiopian in the other. Frank's face lit up.

"Barney and Pomp!" he exclaimed.

It was indeed the two faithful companions of Frank Reade, Jr., in all his wonderful travels by air-ship and electric coach. They had chanced to be in Chicago that same day, and turning a distant corner, saw their beloved employer ahead.

"Be the howiy Vargin," exclaimed Barney, excitedly, "there's Misther Frank hisself!"

"Golly, dat am a fac!" agreed Pomp.

"Bejabers, it's good for sore eyes to see the dear bye onct more. Whist now! I'll be the fust to shake his hand."

"Nebber say dat, you bow-begged P'ishman," spluttered Pomp, with bulging eyes.

"Go an, ye bloody naygur!"

"Jes' yo' hol' on one lilly bit," said Pomp, with a queer light dancing in his eyes. "What'll yo' bet yo' does shake hands wif Marse Frank fust?"

"Och hone! I'll bet ye foive dollars."

"I done take dat bet, P'ish."

"Bejabers, I'll take ye! Put up or shut up!"

"It am done. Golly, look out dar!"

Swift as a flash Pomp, with an adroit kick, knocked Barney's legs from under him. The Hibernian sprawled upon the sidewalk, but was upon his feet instanter and after the flying darky like a cannon ball.

"Be the sowl of St. Pathrick I'll tate that naygur black an' blue," he muttered.

They swooped down upon Frank Reade, Jr., like eagles upon their prey. Barney was the first after all to get hold of Frank's hand, and Pomp did not profit by his clever trick. However, both were so overjoyed to meet their old employer that Frank was nearly overwhelmed.

They fell back respectfully, however, as they suddenly saw that Frank had a companion.

But Whitwell with eager manner now advanced just as Frank was about to reprove them for their rudeness.

"Are these the two faithful fellows of whom I have heard so much as being your companions in your travels, Mr. Reade?" he asked.

"They are Barney and Pomp," replied Frank, waving his hand in introduction. "Allow me to introduce to you Mr. Washington Whitwell."

Barney and Pomp both advanced now and shook hands with Whitwell and were at once favorably impressed with him.

"I shall accept your kind invitation to dinner, Mr. Whitwell," said Frank pleasantly. "Barney and Pomp I will see you both to-morrow."

"No," interposed Whitwell. "Have you any objection to their accompanying us, Mr. Reade?"

Frank looked up in surprise.

"Not in the least," he replied. "Do you include them in your invitation?"

"Yes," replied Washington Whitwell, with earnestness. "What I have to say concerns them very materially as well as us."

Barney and Pomp as well were by no means averse to the prospect of a good dinner. So, without further ado, they all adjourned to the elegant private dining hall of the Grand Pacific, where Washington Whitwell, the millionaire traveler, entertained them in royal shape.

After a surfeit of the good things, they proceeded to Mr. Whitwell's private apartments, where cigars became the order. Cozily ensconced before a cheery sea coal fire, they indulged in a jolly chat and interchange of exciting experiences.

Washington Whitwell proved to be the most able of hosts, and things went smoothly for some time. Then he suddenly exclaimed:

"Now I am ready to unfold to you my project which I think you will agree is a most wonderful and fascinating one. Of course I am not yet assured of your co-operation, yet I will ask you to kindly listen to my story."

"Certainly," replied Frank. "Yet it would be no more than fair for me to hint right now that I have abandoned traveling for a few years and mean to take a rest."

"I shall certainly not urge you against your will," said Whitwell, politely. "Yet I feel sure you will be interested in my story."

"We will gladly listen to it."

"Very well."

Whitwell spread upon the table some magnificent maps and charts of the African continent. He placed his hand upon the line which indicated the Tropic of Cancer, and said:

"This line, you see, runs directly through the center of the Sahara, at least that is what all scientists believe. But there is a greater desert below that line than above it. Just here you will see the boundary line of Fezzan."

"Follow this south and you will see a tract of country which the map gives as an unexplored tract. Now I do not wish to declare this as a fact, but I have every reason to believe it as the truth that in that vast tract of country, unknown to the rest of the world and shut off from all communication with it there exists a race of people, in fact a mighty nation."

"Ah!" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., much interested. "Are they a black people?"

"No," replied Whitwell, quickly. "They are a white people, and highly civilized; that is to say, as civilized as were the Jews in the time of Christ."

"Indeed! That is wonderful."

"I knew you would agree to that."

"But upon what do you base your belief that these people exist in this part of the world?"

"I will show you."

A most wonderful revelation was in store. Whitwell spread upon the table several folds of very ancient MS. The vellum was seared and dingy and yellow, but the Hebrew characters could be plainly traced upon them.

"This MS. I found in a ruined temple in Syria," he said, explanatively. "Fortunately I was able to secure the co-operation of a learned professor in Sanscrit and Arabic languages. With his aid I managed to interpret the reading of what you will agree is one of the most wonderful documents in the possession of any living person. I would accept no sum however large for it."

"I will not attempt to read the MS. literally, but will give you its import in as brief a manner as possible."

"It details the trip of a certain wealthy Syrian merchant with his spice-laden caravan to the borders of the Sea of Sand. It seems that there then existed an isthmus by which it was possible to cross the strange sea—"

"One moment," interrupted Frank, with amazement. "Do you mean to say that this sea of sand was impassable on foot?"

"So the MS. reads."

"Or by boat?"

"If the account is to be credited, nothing could cross it except the birds. A boat would be absorbed in its quicksand depths by some mysterious suction."

"Whew!" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr. "I never dreamed of the existence of such a wonderful sea. It seems the wonders of the world are not yet half discovered. What is the area of this Sea of Sand?"

"Many hundreds of miles. Indeed, it completely surrounds the land in which the lost people live, if they are in existence to-day."

"You speak of an isthmus?"

"Yes, according to this account there then existed an isthmus which connected the terra firma of the desert with the main land of the vast island or continent surrounded by the Sea of Sand. This land was wonderfully fertile, and produced many rare and valuable products and minerals, it being mountainous in some parts. Quite a trade sprang up between the Malakites, as these people were called, and the Syrians, but one day an earthquake caused the isthmus to sink, and from that day to this, over eighteen hundred years, not a thing has been seen or known of the lost people beyond the Sea of Sand."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE START.

FRANK READE, JR., listened to the marvelous account rendered by Washington Whitwell like one spell-bound.

Barney's broad mug was wide apart in amazement, while Pomp's eyes distended like saucers, and he scratched his woolly head.

"Dat am simply wonderful," he declared.

"Begob, it sounds like one of me grandmother's fairy tales," averred Barney.

"Is there not a possibility that it is all a fable?" asked Frank, incredulously. "Can you positively vouch for the truthfulness of the MS., Mr. Whitwell?"

The traveler's face flushed.

"Of course not," he replied quickly. "Yet I know of no good reason for discrediting it."

"How do you know for a fact that this Sea of Sand exists?"

"Well," said Whitwell, with an air of quiet assurance. "I ought to know it. I have viewed it with my own eyes."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Frank, with a sharp cry. "Then you know what you are talking about?"

"Of course I do."

"Pardon me for my incredulity," said Frank Reade, Jr., quietly. "But have you any other evidence than this MS. of the existence of an inland continent beyond this Sea of Sand?"

"I'll tell you how it was. I was a slave among the Bedouins for three years. In one of their expeditions we came to the border of this wonderful sea. I then learned that they still preserve a tradition of the lost people."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Frank, deeply impressed. "Will you kindly describe the appearance of this strange sea?"

"Certainly," replied Whitwell. "It is hard to distinguish it from the rest of the desert. There is a very slight difference in the glistening of the sands. Indeed, many a caravan has wandered from the desert path and been instantly engulfed in the treacherous sea."

"What! Are not the quicksands moist? Is there no water visible?"

"Not visible. A thin scum of dust like white powder covers the surface of the sea. Throw a heavy object into it, and the commotion for many hundred feet about is like the trembling of a vast sea of jelly."

Frank Reade, Jr., arose and paced the floor back and forth excitedly. Suddenly he paused.

"You have stirred my interest deeply," he cried, with enthusiasm. "There is one thing sure. With my air ship we could cross that sea of sand with safety."

"Ah, there is the idea," cried Washington Whitwell, trembling with excitement. "I need say no more. You understand me now. There is no other possible way of relinking this last race with the civilized world."

"I am tempted to go there," declared Frank, earnestly. "But I promised my wife to remain at home for a few years."

"Of course I cannot urge you against your better judgment," declared Whitwell, excitedly. "But only think what a mighty benefit it would be to the world at large and to science. Indeed, one is constrained to almost believe it one's duty."

It was a powerful argument and Frank Reade, Jr., felt the old desire for travel returning to him. It was with difficulty that he fought it off.

The discussion lasted for some hours, Washington Whitwell employing many arguments and even entreaty. Before leaving him for the night, the great inventor did take his hand and say earnestly:

"My dear sir, I feel a deep and powerful interest in this matter. I recognize its importance and the benefits to be derived to the world at large as well as you. I will make no direct promise, but will think the matter over. In the morning I shall start for Readestown. I shall be at home to-morrow night. I will consult with my friends and decide by another day. I will then telegraph you here."

"That settles it!" cried Whitwell, confidently. "I know that you will go. I will begin to make preparations."

"Not so fast," interrupted Frank Reade, Jr. "Remember I make no promises. Barney and Pomp, what do you think of the trip?"

Pomp cut a pigeon wing shuffle in the center of the floor, while Barney's eyes shone like stars.

"Begorra, I'm jist achin' fer a thrip in the old ship, Mister Frank," he said.

"Yo'-kin jest count on dis nig ebry time, Marse Frank. I see a

heap tired ob stayin' round dis part ob de worl' all de time. What do you say ob dat, I'ish?" Pomp turned to Barney.

"Be the Sowl of Saint Pether," puffed Barney, "I objec' to yer callin' me I'ish any more, you woolly top nig. If yez don't threat me with more respect bejabbers I'll thump ye."

"Ki yi dar!" cried Pomp, derisively. "Yo' better be a little mo' respectable to me. Yo' am jes' too sassy."

"Arrah, I'll break yer back, naygur!"

"No, yo' won't, yo' I'ish mucker!"

A collision would certainly have been the result of this but for Frank Reade, Jr.

"There, there! Enough of that!" he said, authoritatively.

Barney contented himself with making savage grimaces at Pomp behind the young inventor's back, while Pomp glared at his tormentor.

"You would think that they were deadly enemies," said Frank aside to Whitwell with a laugh. "But the truth is they are the best of friends."

"I only hope that you will decide to go," said Whitwell, as he politely bade them good-night.

Frank secured rooms in the hotel for the night. Barney and Pomp were to accompany him back to Readestown the next day.

The young inventor spent an almost sleepless night. He could not make up his mind just what to do.

At the train the next day Whitwell appeared to see them off. His last words were:

"Be sure to telegraph me that you will go. I shall wait in much suspense. I will bear all the expenses of the trip."

"No you won't," retorted Frank. "If I go, we will divide expenses."

The train rolled out of the depot. It was along day's ride to Readestown. But at just dark Frank alighted from the train, and was met by his wife, whom he took into his arms and kissed.

It required but a glance for the astute little woman to guess that there was something of no light weight upon Frank Reade, Jr.'s mind. She did not say anything, however, until they were at home and alone.

Then the young inventor unbosomed himself to her. He told her of his meeting with Whitwell and his strange story.

"I knew that something of the kind was upon your mind, Frank," she declared. "When I met you at the depot."

Then she arose and threw her arms about his neck.

"I know that you want to go also," she cried. "And that which restrains you is your promise to me to remain home. While I like to have you with me, I know what a wonderful thing it would be to discover that lost race. I would be selfish to say one word in opposition. You shall go, indeed; I believe it is your duty to go."

A glad cry escaped Frank Reade, Jr.'s, lips, and he caught her in his arms and kissed her again and again.

"That is spoken like my own true little wife," he cried. "Yet if you had demurred in the least, I should have given up the expedition."

"I will manage to kill time in some way," she said, "until you come home. Ah, I cannot help but worry about you. Yet, I know that you will come home safely."

A short while later Frank walked down to the telegraph office and sent a dispatch to his machinist in Chicago to come on, for he desired to make a few changes in the air ship.

It was his purpose to add another set of rotoscopes, and also to enlarge the screw. This he believed would fit the air ship for any voyage which he might see fit to undertake.

At the same time he wired to Washington Whitwell at the Grand Pacific Hotel the following:

"I shall start just as soon as I can fit-out my air-ship. Come on at once and bring all your maps. Yours,

"FRANK READE, JR."

Then he went down to the great building where the air-ship was housed. Barney and Pomp met him at the door and cried:

"Begorra, I knew as how ye'd go, Mister Frank. Well, Barney O'Shea will be glad to be afloat onct more."

"Marse Frank, I've done glad yo' am goin'," declared Pomp, earnestly. "I've gwine to stick by yer, Marse Frank."

Frank thanked these two humble servants, whom he knew to be staunch friends, and went on board the air-ship.

His experienced and skilled eye speedily hit upon several points which he believed he could improve.

He went over the ship thoroughly and examined all the machinery. As the thoughts of past expeditions came to him, he felt a thrill of the old excitement and liking for adventure.

The next day the machinist came on and work was begun in earnest. Washington Whitwell also appeared and rendered most able assistance.

The exciting report that Frank Reade, Jr. was about to take a trip of thousands of miles in search of a lost people got about the country, and a tremendous fever of interest was created.

The newspapers had column articles and descriptions of the wonderful ship and portraits of the young inventor.

Frank realized that the agony had begun when he received a flood of letters from all over the country, from cranks, who either desired to accompany him or render a service of some questionable sort.

Indeed, if the young inventor had been inclined to receive all these applications with favor, it would have required an air ship of fifty times the size of this one to accommodate the passengers.

One man had the audacity to advance the claims of a superior set of rotoscopes for the ship. For the privilege of using his invention, Frank Reade, Jr., he proposed, should pay him a large sum and take him in as equal partner.

A women's missionary society forwarded numberless bales of clothing, to be taken among the poor heathens. Another society applied for permission to send a dozen missionaries on the air-ship for the purpose of civilizing the benighted lost race. Frank had to use not a little of diplomacy to turn aside these offers without wounding the feelings of some quite well meaning people.

He received messages from the mayors of many big cities, asking him to stop over on his way, promising that a fete should be held. Other honors of like sort were proffered him, but the young inventor declined them all.

The good people of Readestown, however, insisted upon giving him a royal send-off, and Frank could not demur.

Accordingly the pretty little town was draped with bunting, a civic parade was held, speeches were offered, and a grand celebration was indulged in.

Fireworks were left out of the programme, however, for fear that some harm might be done to the air-ship. But a salute was fired from a battery of guns.

The air-ship rested upon a platform in the public square, and there the young inventor and his brave little wife held an impromptu levee.

Everybody pressed forward, shaking hands with Frank and wishing him the best of luck. Washington Whitwell was striding up and down the deck impatiently waiting for the hour of departure.

Barney and Pomp were leaning over the rail chatting with some of their friends, when the town clock pealed the hour of three.

Instantly Frank Reade, Jr., stepped forward and caught his wife and child in his arms and kissed them tenderly. Then he embraced his father and mother, and springing upon the deck of the air ship he cried in a ringing voice:

"Kind friends all, I will say to you *au revoir*. When I see you next I hope it will be on my safe return from the Sea of Sand. Rest assured your kind remembrances will travel with me, and once my mission is accomplished it will be the same great joy to know that I am to return to dear old Readestown. *Au revoir!*"

He waved his cap and the air was filled with thundering cheers.

Then at a signal from Frank Barney set the rotoscopes in motion and like a mighty bird the air ship arose.

Up, up it went above the house-tops. Not until they were half a mile high did Frank give the order to go ahead. Then straight eastward their course was set.

Washington Whitwell seemed to be in a perfect whirl of delight. He waltzed up and down the deck, ran to the rail, looked over, waved his hands to those below, cheered, and altogether for time acted like a wild man.

He came to Frank's side finally, and removing his hat, cried:

"I take off my hat to the most famous inventor the world ever knew. I am honored to stand in his presence."

"You do me too much honor, Mr. Whitwell," said Frank, modestly.

"Not a bit," cried the great traveler earnestly. "What invention on record has ever equaled the air-ship? I tell you none, and you are entitled to the name of the greatest inventor the world ever knew."

Frank modestly thanked his admirer, and presently went into the pilot-house. Barney was engaged in oiling some of the machinery.

"Will we stop on the way, Mister Frank?" asked the son of Erin, casually. "Or shall we kape a straight coarse all av the way?"

"We shall stop in Philadelphia!" declared Frank. "And also in New York for one day. I have some purchases to make. Then we will strike out stright across the Atlantic."

"Yis, sorr," replied Barney, anxiously. "But—what will it be t'other side of the wather? Shall we kape on to Afriky?"

"Marse Frank, dat 'Ishman wants to get him's head into mo trubble wid dem dynamiters on de odder side ob de water, I done tink fo' a suttin fac," cried Pomp, who had just come into the room.

"Kape you're mouth shut, you stump of charcoal," roared Barney, whisking a streak of the oil from the snout of the can across Pomp's face, making that sable dignitary splutter and choke as a jet of it shot into his open mouth. "Begorra, one wud think that yez owned the air-ship."

Frank had gone on into the cabin, and there was nothing to prevent Pomp's retaliating in kind and he did so with a vengeance. A pail of very dirty water sat on a bench.

In an instant he had seized it and dashed it over the Hibernian steersman, at the same time crying:

"Ki yi! 'Fish, yo' tink yo' kin fool wid dis chile. Take dat fo' de grease yo' gib me."

"Whurroo!" yelled Barney, as he emerged from the flood gasping like a porpoise. "I'll have yer loife for that naygur."

Out of the pilot-house he chased his sable colleague. Across the deck of the air-ship to the cabin stairs. Here they came to grief.

Whether purposely or otherwise, Pomp suddenly lay flat on the deck. Barney went over him like a shot out of a catapult, and down the cabin stairs in a discomfited heap. Pomp got a whack in the temple from Barney's heavy cowhide boot, which, strange to say, made the colored gentleman see stars.

When Barney had pulled himself together and reached the deck, Pomp was gone. He had not time to search for him, for at that moment he heard Frank calling him in the pilot-house.

"Begob, Oi'll lay fur that naygur," muttered Barney, vengefully, as

he went limping across the deck. "That was a foine thrick av his, but I know a better one."

When he entered the pilot-house Frank Reade, Jr. was there with a large chart.

"Here is the course we shall pursue, Barney," he declared. "We will stop at Philadelphia, New York and Halifax. Then we will go across the Atlantic straight to Paris. We will not stop in London. Our last reception there was not of the kindest, so we'll cut Johnny Bull this time."

"Shure tho'ts no more than roight," cried Barney, with true Irish hatred of the British. "Och hone, if ye'd only shtop in Dublin ye'd be shure to have the best of thratement."

"That would be out of our course," declared Frank, tersely.

"Yis, sorr. What course shall we be afther takin' thin, sorr?"

"Straight across the Mediterranean to Algiers. From there we will strike out across the wide Sahara to the southward. Now you understand?"

"Begorra I do, sorr."

Barney proceeded with the work of oiling the machinery, and Frank went out on deck. He met Washington Whitwell.

"It seems as if I cannot wait for the day to come when we shall reach the Sea of Sand," said the great American traveler.

"You must have patience," laughed Frank. "We will get there some time."

"How soon ought we to reach Philadelphia?"

"In three days, I think."

"Will we stop there long?"

"Only a day. Let me see," pursued Frank. "I am curious to know of your life among the Bedouins. You say you were a slave among them?"

Both sat down by the rail of the air-ship. Whitwell, in talking, carelessly threw one arm over the rail.

"I was a slave among them for three years," replied Whitwell.

"And pardon me if I compare it to three years in hell. I cannot recall that time without a shudder."

"I can understand," rejoined Frank.

"The civilized world knows little of the vastness of that world beyond the Great Sahara and extending even into the interior of Africa," pursued Whitwell. "There are vast cities peopled with savage tribes who war upon each other constantly."

"These people, many of them till the soil, and when the crops are ripe the wandering Bedouins of the desert descend upon them and rob them. It is a system of piracy most unparalleled. Woe to the stranger who falls into the clutches of the Bedouins. His lot will be a hard one."

"Indeed," exclaimed Frank, deeply interested. "How did you finally escape?"

"By the merest chance," replied Whitwell. "Our sheik pursued a caravan almost to the gates of Damascus. We camped in a little valley. In the night I filed the chain which bound my limbs, and getting onto one of the sheik's horses rode into Damascus. The English consul there aided me in returning home."

"You were fortunate."

"I was indeed. I would not go through it again for—"

A little shriek of pain escaped Washington Whitwell's lips, and he drew his hand back quickly over the rail.

Strangely enough it was from some mysterious cause or other bathed in red blood.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE AIR SHIP IN DANGER.

FRANK READE Jr., astonished beyond measure, was quickly upon his feet.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "You are hurt, Whitwell."

"Yes," replied the millionaire traveler, holding up his hand. "I understand it now. It was a bullet, and it has passed through my hand completely."

Then he sprang to the rail and leaned over. Far below in a meadow both he and Frank saw a man with a gun. This explained it.

"The scamp has fired at the air ship to attract our attention," cried Frank. "Well, that was a fool's trick. He should not have pointed his gun at the ship. I'd give him a lesson only that I cannot believe he meant to do any damage."

The man with the gun was waving his hand excitedly.

This of course precluded any supposition that the shot was intended to do harm. Probably the ignoramus did not once believe that the gun would carry so far.

Frank turned and gave orders to Barney to give the ship more elevation. This was done at once.

Then Whitwell went into the cabin and Frank bound up his hand for him, dressing the wound skillfully.

"Better my hand than my head," said the millionaire traveler cheerfully, as the job was completed.

After that Whitwell was careful about leaning over the ship's rail. There was no telling what might happen.

In due time after passing over a wonderful tract of country and many large cities, Frank one day took station in the bow with his glass and cried:

"I can sight Philadelphia."

All were much excited, and Whitwell was by Frank's side in an instant. A wonderful sight was revealed as the air-ship hovered over Philadelphia, the Quaker City.

Flags went up, the city decorated and the firing of salutes in order,

Thousands of people like swarms of bees could be seen in the streets below gazing upwards at the air-ship.

It was decided that the air-ship should alight upon the top of a large building. This was no sooner done than the owner of the building appeared.

But matters were adjusted with him by Frank Reade, Jr., and the air-ship was allowed to hold her aerial perch while Frank and Barney went down on a shopping tour.

Whitwell did not accompany them.

"I shall make my purchases in New York," he declared. "I prefer to remain aboard."

So he was left aboard with Pomp. No sooner was Frank Reade Jr., out of the way than dozens of distinguished men came on board to inspect the wonder of the air.

It pleased Whitwell greatly to be able to show them about the air-ship.

In due time Frank and Barney returned with their purchases. Scores of polite invitations to receptions and dinners were waiting for the young inventor but he declined them all promptly.

The stay in Philadelphia was brief.

A few hours later the rotascopes were set in motion and the air-ship once more rose upward. When less than a mile high a straight course was set for New York.

The greatest American metropolis was reached at dark, and as before Frank caused the air-ship to alight upon a building. A great crowd was in attendance and Frank did condescend to accept of a supper at Delmonico's.

All the distinguished and wealthy people of New York vied with each other in doing the young inventor great honor. Yet he would not consent to an extended stay and before another night the air-ship was on its way to Halifax.

Only a slight stop was made here, then the great flight across the Atlantic was begun. Once above the mighty waste of waters all felt that the great expedition was really begun.

It was a novel thing indeed to Mr. Washington Whitwell to stand upon the deck of the air ship and see the vast ocean passing beneath his feet.

Ships and steamers by hundreds were met and passed, and salutes exchanged with many. Two days out from Halifax, Pomp was leaning over the rail one morning when suddenly his eyes bulged almost out of their sockets.

"Marse Frank!" he cried excitedly. "I done tink I see a man down yender. Come here an' see fo' yo'self."

Somewhat surprised at the darky's manner, Frank sprang to the rail. Sure enough, it needed no glass to see far below upon the broad bosom of the sea, a man in sailor attire clinging to an upturned boat.

His face was turned upward, white and despairing, and he waved his arms wildly.

Frank shouted some orders to Barney and the air-ship began to descend.

It was plain that the fellow was some shipwrecked sailor and it was only consistent with humanity to save him.

The ship went down rapidly, and when within twenty-five feet of the water, Frank Reade, Jr., threw over a rope, and shouted:

"Aho, my friend! Don't you want to come up?"

"Blast me eyes!" returned the astounded castaway, in complete amazement. "What sort of craft is that?"

"This is an air-ship."

"Who be ye?"

"I am Frank Reade, Jr."

"Well, cap'en, dash me, you've the queerest craft I've seen yet, and I've sailed the seas for forty years. I've seen all sorts of craft, but never one afore that could navigate the air."

"Don't you want to come up?"

The poor tar looked puzzled.

"How'll I ever get down agin?" he asked.

Frank Reade, Jr. and Whitwell nigh split their sides with laughter.

"What is your name, friend?" asked Frank.

"Jim Cable."

"Well, Jim, we can't waste more time here. If you'll come up we'll land you in Paris safe and sound or put you aboard some vessel, as you please."

"Is that a straight deal, mate?"

"It is."

"Done! I'm your lobster. Hold fast, an' I'll come aboard."

The castaway seized hold of the rope and came up as nimble as a monkey. He clambered over the rail of the air-ship and shook hands bluffly with his rescuers.

He told his story in a straightforward manner.

"I was mate of the schooner *Persis*," he said. "Day before yesterday she sprung a leak an' in half an hour went to the bottom. Four of us got into one boat. A wind came up and swamped us. We had a tough swim. All went down but me. I climbed onto ther boat an' have been drifting about ever since."

"For what port were you bound?" asked Frank Reade, Jr.

"For Boston from the Hague."

"Then you want to get to Boston?"

"I reckon that's it."

"Very well--the first vessel bound for that port that I can speak I will put you aboard of."

"Thank ye, sir."

Jim Cable was paralyzed with amazement, as he went over the air-ship and noted her beautiful build and wonderful mechanism.

But he could not understand what the propelling power of the ship was. His knowledge of electricity was exceedingly limited.

He made friends with Barney and Pomp, and in short in a very brief space of time came to a conclusion which he was not backward in openly expressing.

"Blast me eyes," he cried, with a swagger, "this is the most likely craft I was ever aboard of yet. She ain't much fer top rigging, but she rides stiddy and ship-shape. Blow me, but I'd like to see her in a puff o' wind."

"Ah, Jim," said Frank, pleasantly, "a storm in the air is vastly different from a gale on the ocean. The air ship handles herself fairly well, yet we always avoid meeting a storm if possible."

"But how do ye do that?" asked Jim, in a puzzled way.

"If possible we rise high enough in the air to be above it." Jim accepted this explanation, and then hitching up his trousers, said:

"Look here, cap'en. Ain't got a berth fer an extra hand, have ye? Dash me, but I'd like to ship aboard this craft. There ain't no white feather in my make up, cap'en, an' I'll do my part every time."

Frank Reade, Jr., gave a sudden start. It had occurred to him but a short while before that when Africa was reached they would be short-handed. There certainly were duties enough aboard the ship for an extra hand.

He was favorably impressed with Jim Cable. He perceived at a glance that he was a strong, courageous fellow, good natured and doubtless a good worker. Moreover his knowledge of the points of a ship would not be out of place.

Acting upon impulse he said:

"Do you mean that, Jim Cable?"

"Every time," replied the sailor, earnestly.

"Do you know where we are going? You may be exposed to many perils before we return to America."

Jim shrugged his shoulders.

"Humph! I don't care for that," he cried, contemptuously. "I'm not a chicken. Try me, cap'en, an' if I don't do the right ropes you can give me a walking ticket when we get to Poree. Is that fair an' square?"

"Very well, Jim. I will try you," said Frank, with resolution. "You may go in and tell Barney to show you your duties."

The young inventor never regretted having taken bluff Jim Cable into his employ. He proved a faithful, efficient man.

While he did not exactly fraternize with Barney and Pomp he was nevertheless always on good terms with them. An incident occurred which increased the respect of all on board for Jim Cable.

One day the air-ship was gliding through a fleecy cloud. Objects aft could not be seen from the forward part of the ship. It chanced that Barney was out on a small platform over the propeller investigating some part in which there was a slight friction.

Suddenly one of the flukes caught him in the small of the back.

In an instant he was hurled from the platform. In falling, however, he was carried under the ship by the revolving propeller shaft, his coat was torn from his back, and he was left hanging by his right arm to a brace which was apt to part at any moment and let him fall the frightful distance of a mile into the sea.

It was a horrifying moment to poor Barney.

He hung to the brace under the air-ship, and his teeth chattered with terror.

"Och, Howly Mither preserve me! It's kilt I am!" he cried, in wild despair. "Misther Frank, help, help! Save me!"

Frank was in the cabin, Washington Whitwell was beyond hearing and Pomp was in the cooking galley. Barney's position seemed a desperate one. He could not for long retain his hold upon the brace. To fall was to meet with certain death.

"Help! help!" he cried wildly. "Och hone! it's a dead man I am." He began to call upon his patron saint firmly believing that his last hour had come, when a strong voice came to him.

"Belay there, me hearty! I'm coming to set yer compass right. Blast my eyes, lad! however did ye get in that fix?"

Barney saw Jim Cable leaning over the platform, and a great cry of joy went up from his lips.

The sturdy seaman in a few seconds had a half hitch around the stern post of the air ship with a rope. Then by drawing it alongside until he was about amidships it was brought within Barney's reach.

"Grab it, shipmate, an' I'll fetch ye aboard," shouted Jim Cable.

Barney obeyed and swung out on the rope. For a moment he was suspended between Heaven and earth, then with a powerful effort of muscle, Jim Cable drew him up to the air ship's rail.

Barney clambered over and fell half fainting on the deck.

The excited cries had now brought all hands aft.

"What is the trouble?" asked Frank Reade, Jr., in surprise.

A few drops of brandy brought Barney to, and he explained the accident which had befallen him. He strode up to Jim Cable, and offering him his hand, cried:

"Here's the fist of an Oirishman, sorr, an' ye'll never want fer a friend so long as Barney O'Shea lives. But fer yure brave work I'd be food for the fishes this minnit, bejabers. Misther Frank, he's saved me loife."

"It was indeed a brave deed. Cable, you have done well."

"Avast thar, shipmates," said Cable, shifting his position uneasily. "Rap me with a marling spike but 'tain't no more nor anybody else would do. I made reckoning fer a jiffy, though, that it was all over with the gent."

Barney grinned his sweetest at being dubbed a gent, and cried fulsomely:

"It's a roight foine gintleman ye are yersilf, sorr, an' I'm honored to claim ye as me friend."

From that hour Jim Cable stood high in Barney's estimation. He went quietly back to his work and seemed unconscious of the unstinted praise which his conduct had evoked.

Frank now discovered that they were over the English channel.

It would be an easy matter now to turn in the direction of London. But the young inventor had no desire to visit the English metropolis. His last experience there when Barney had been arrested for alleged connection with a dynamite conspiracy, was yet fresh in his mind.

He held the air-ship's course for Paris.

It had been a wonderfully smooth voyage thus far. No storm had been encountered and but little head wind.

It was near noon of a beautiful day that the air-ship hovered over gay Paris.

But the arrival was no surprise to the denizens of that wonderful city.

The cable had conveyed the news a week ahead, and preparations had been made for the coming of the famous American air-ship.

A platform had been constructed on the Bois de Boulogne. A cordon of military was about it to keep the crowd back.

The President of the French Republic, with his cabinet, were in waiting on the platform to greet the young inventor.

It was easy for Frank to detect all this with a glass, and he of course accepted the invitation and allowed the air-ship to descend.

As it hovered over the Bois cheers wild and enthusiastic burst from the lips of the excited populace.

Frank allowed the ship to descend slowly, and it softly rested upon the platform. Then Pomp let down the gang-ladder, and Frank, dressed as fine as any of the distinguished passengers waiting to greet him, descended from the deck of the air-ship.

It was not his first visit to Paris, and he was greeted by many whom he had met before.

He was received with the utmost of courtesy and distinction. A number of the dignitaries insisted on his spending several days in the metropolis.

Frank did accept an invitation to dinner at the American Legation, and was dined in a most royal fashion.

Then he took the French President and a number of his cabinet officers aboard the air-ship, and took them so high in the air that they were fain to admit a desire to descend, and agreed that Paris after all, viewed from such a dizzy height, was but a small part of the world. In descending, Frank brought the air-ship to rest upon a high roof. Once more alighting on this roof, Frank was taking leave of the gentlemen at the gang-ladder, when he heard the sound of loud voices in the pilot-house.

Leaving the gentlemen with an adieu he hastened thither.

A startling scene was revealed. Pomp and Barney were loudly berating a tall, well-dressed man whose eyes were disguised with blue glasses. He talked to them in French, which they could not understand. But Frank understood him perfectly well.

It seemed that Barney had found the stranger in the engine-room studying the mechanism of the air-ship. The Irishman knew that there were strict orders against allowing strangers in this room and he could not account for this man's presence there.

How he had got there he knew not and peremptorily ordered him to leave. The stranger did not know English and insisted on continuing his inspection of the machinery.

"Troth an' it's the master's orders to allow nobody in here," Barney muttered to himself. "Ow! I'll fire the spalpeen out."

He called to Pomp who was in an adjoining room, and the two of them were about to eject the stranger forcibly, when Frank appeared.

"What do you want here?" Frank asked the fellow in French.

The answers given were incoherent and not at all clear. It required but a few moments for Frank to make the discovery that the man was mentally unbalanced.

He was a crank upon the subject of flying machines. How he had got aboard without being seen was a mystery.

Frank Reade, Jr., knew well the danger of permitting this individual to remain even a moment aboard the air-ship. He had had experience with cranks of this man's type before.

"You will have to leave the ship," he declared authoritatively. "We do not allow strangers aboard. Get out at once."

The crank elevated his eyebrows and bent a piercing glance upon Frank Reade, Jr.

"Is this the sort of treatment you will accord a brother?" he hissed malevolently. "Curse you for your incivility. You shall never reap the triumph you seek with your air-ship. I will destroy it!"

In that instant Frank saw the insane gleam in his eyes. He motioned to Barney and Pomp but with a lightning like move the crank seized a heavy sledge hammer, raised it aloft and dashed it down upon the delicate dynamos.

Then with a wild shriek he dashed from the cabin.

"Follow him! capture him!" cried Frank Reade, Jr. furiously. "He shall pay for this. Don't let the miscreant escape."

Barney and Pomp were after the crank in a flash, but he eluded them and disappeared in the building where no trace of him could be found, though an assiduous search was made.

The damage done by the crank was of no slight sort. It was impossible to raise the air-ship until the dynamos were replaced or repaired, and this would take time.

Of course, Frank Reade, Jr., was very angry. He knew that it would delay his departure from Paris very materially.

But there was no other way but to at once go to work repairing the mischief done. Barney and Pomp returned, and now the wire netting which covered the ship when occasion required for effectually keeping man or beast from it was raised, and precaution taken against any other crank who might come along.

But the worst was not yet known.

Suddenly Washington Whitwell with white face came rushing aboard.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., as he met him.

"Matter?" gasped Whitwell. "We must leave this roof at once."

"Why?"

"Because the building is on fire in a dozen different places. The fire department can never control it. Get the ship away from here as soon as possible."

"My God!" gasped Frank Reade, Jr. "It is the work of that confounded crank. The air-ship cannot be saved."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### BARNEY AND POMP HAVE SURPRISING ADVENTURES.

WHITWELL gazed at the young inventor aghast.

"What is that?" he cried fiercely. "I tell you the ship must be saved."

"Aye, but how?" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., hopelessly.

"Can we not start the rotascopes?"

"No."

"Why?"

"That miserable crank has ruined the dynamos, and without them the ship cannot be made to ascend."

It was an appalling fact. The two men looked at each other with pallid questioning faces. What was to be done?

The building was on fire as Whitwell had said in a dozen places.

Undoubtedly it was the work of the envious and vengeful crank. He certainly meant the destruction of the air ship.

How could they save it? That was the absorbing question. It found no ready answer.

The bells were ringing furiously, excited sounds came up from the street. The firemen were putting up ladders. A tremendous roar was audible beneath the roof showing that the flames were making fearful headway.

It seemed as if an end was to come to the trip to the Sea of Sand. Destruction of the air-ship meant baffling of their plans, for a time at least, until Frank Reade, Jr. could construct another.

This would require nearly a year of time. Impatient Washington Whitwell could not bear to think of this.

"Is there not a way?" he cried, desperately. "How long would it take to repair the dynamos?"

"More than an hour," replied Frank.

"In that time the air-ship will become a heap of ashes."

"Yes."

The firemen were working valiantly. But it did not require an experienced eye to see that the building was doomed.

But when despair seemed to overwhelm him, Frank Reade, Jr. saw and grasped the only likely way out of the difficulty.

The roof of this building adjoined that of a number of others.

The idea occurred suddenly to Frank that the fire would be gotten under control before it could reach those buildings. Why not drag the air-ship thither? Thought meant action with him, and he cried:

"Barney, Pomp, Cable, all hands give a lift—lively now!"

As all came out excitedly it required but a few words of explanation from Frank to bring a cheer from their lips. All wondered why the idea had not occurred to them before.

The air ship was not heavy, and it was not a difficult matter to drag it, with all their strength, slowly over the roof.

Several firemen now gained the roof and gave them a hand. The ship was quickly placed beyond reach of the flames.

Then Frank Reade, Jr., went aboard and set at work repairing the dynamos.

"I am sorry we stopped in Paris," he declared. "It was a dangerous thing to do. We will not stop again until we reach our destination."

Fortunately there were spare dynamos aboard, and Frank replaced the smashed ones with these.

In the course of a couple of hours he had everything all right, and sending excuses to those who had so cordially invited him out to dine with them he took leave of Paris.

The air ship once more mounted zenithward, and hovering over the gay city a moment Frank set the course and they began the long flight to Algiers.

The next day they were over the Swiss Alps—higher than the Matterhorn with its chill air. Descending as they crossed the mighty heights, warmer air was encountered, and as they passed later over the seven hills of Rome and across the Bay of Naples, avoiding the hot breath of Vesuvius, the air became balmy and their spirits arose.

Darkness came on as they floated along the line of the Italian coast. Suddenly Barney came on deck, and in an alarmed manner cried:

"Oh, Misther Frank, I think as how the dynamos are going wrong intirely again. For the love of St. Pathrick, will ye come below and see fer yerself?"

Frank was quick to follow the excited Irishman below decks.

It required but a glance for him to see that the journal in which the motor shaft revolved was cracked and crumbling into fragments. This was due no doubt to a flaw in the steel.

Should the motor shaft get displaced from the cracked journal it

would come in contact with the wood work and likely tear it to pieces.

This would obstruct the machinery, and by bringing the rotascopes to a stop, send the air-ship crashing to the earth.

The horrors of such a happening were easily appreciated by Frank Reade.

He had no idea of allowing the catastrophe to occur, at least not if he could prevent it.

So he made a swift diagnosis of the broken journal and then hurriedly said to Pomp who stood near with bulging eyes.

"Go to the wheel and turn the ship's course inland, Pomp. Look out for a good place to descend. This must be repaired before we can go further."

Pomp was quick to obey.

The air-ship was allowed to go inland for some miles. Then Frank saw a high mountain.

There was a spot visible which looked like the crater of an extinct volcano.

This seemed like a good place for descent and the air-ship was allowed to descend. Down it went slowly and hovered a moment in the crater until a favorable spot was formed for it to rest.

Then Frank brought it gently to the ground, and the rotascopes ceased to revolve, and the propeller was inactive.

It was getting dark fast, but as well as could be discerned they were far from any habitation.

This was what Frank Reade, Jr., wanted, and he believed that they would be safe from any molestation that night.

Fortunately there were a number of spare journals aboard the air-ship, and Frank knew that it would require but a day's work more or less to repair the damage.

He started the search light and sent its rays flashing through the valley.

No sign of human life was visible and all was as silent as the tomb. As was characteristic of him, the young inventor now proposed to turn this temporary misfortune to good account, and he cried cheerily:

"I'll tell you what, friends, we will stop here for a little rest. What say you? There is nobody about here to bother us, as was the case in Paris. To-morrow we will explore this crater and enjoy ourselves."

"I'm agreeable," cried Washington Whitwell, readily. "That suits me well, Mr. Reade. It will seem good to take a little walk on terra firma."

"Then it is settled," declared Frank. "Barney, perhaps you and Pomp may find some congenial spirits in some mountain inn hereabouts."

"What's that ye say?" exclaimed the Hibernian, his eyes twinkling with merriment. "Arrah, but ye know roight well, Misther Frank, that I'm not a dhrinkin' man. I soigned the pledge to Father McCarty in Readestown afore iver I left home. But—troth there's the naygur now—"

"Look ahare yo' 'ish loofah yo'," cried Pomp rolling his eyes up comically. "Don't yo' go fo' to gib me a bad karakter afo' Marse Frank. But den he knows dis yer culled gemmen too well fo' to bleebe any ob yo' fish yarns."

"Begorra, I'd hate to thrust ye wid a bar'l of Scotch whisky ye sun burnt jay ye. Out an yefer a hyperkrii."

"Yo' jes look to home yo' 'ish bogtrotter yo'," sputtered Pomp. "I gib yo' a shot in de jaw ef yo' gits gay wid me."

Barney made a comical grimace at the exasperated Ethiopian. This was too much for Pomp, and he lowered his head and made a dive for his tormentor.

But Barney was up to this trick and with a quick leap in the air went over his opponent's head. But his foot caught on Pomp's shoulder and tripped him.

A bucket of soft-soap had been left at the foot of the rotascope shaft. It was considerably more than a bucket: it was a keg equalling fully a half barrel.

Barney dived head-first into this, filling his nose, ears, eyes and mouth with the unsavory stuff.

Over went the keg, and the slimy, slippery stuff suffused the air-ship's deck. Barney floundered in this, unable to rise.

Pomp, missing his first mark, had wheeled and made another drive at Barney.

But instead of striking the Hibernian, he was just in time to ram his head against the bottom of the keg.

The head did not give way; that is, not the Ethiopian's head, but the head of the keg did, and was knocked clean out, while the soapy half barrel slid down over the negro's shoulders with great facility, holding him as in a vise.

His feet went out from under him, of course, on the slippery deck, and over he rolled.

Barney by this time had regained his feet, and was digging the soft-soap out of his eyes and ears. But the first thing his gaze rested on was the helpless Pomp, who could not free himself from the barrel.

"Yah! yah! yah!" he roared in the wildest of laughter. "Wud ye lunk at the naygur! Begobs, that's tit for tat, an' I thought I got it in the neck meself; but just lunk at ther naygur, fer ther love of Saint Pether! Ha, ha, ha!"

Poor Pomp was vainly endeavoring to get free of the barrel. Barney's triumph was short lived, for his feet slipped on the slimy deck, and down he went again, this time caroming against the rotascope shaft, which hurled him ten feet away against the air-ship's rail, turning him a dozen somersaults.

Pomp, in the midst of his dilemma, had to stop and laugh in his turn.

"Ki, yi, yi!" he roared. "Look at dat 'ishman fo' de lub cf Hebben. Dat am dess de funniest Ieber seed."

Luckily for the two roysterers, Frank Reade, Jr., had gone into the cabin just as the ruction was beginning.

But there was a witness, and this was Tim Cable. The castaway laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Blast me eyes!" he cried hilariously. "If ye ain't both in quarantine, and nary a free pass out. Belay there, you feller in the barrel. Lay quiet a minute."

Seizing a hatchet, he went up to the imprisoned Pomp, and cleaving the chimes at a blow the barrel fell in pieces, and the negro was released.

Now that the fun was over, there was the fiddler to pay, and it cost no little work and skill to remove all traces of the soft-soap from the deck, so that Frank Reade, Jr., should not see it when he came up from below.

But darkness now came on.

Washington Whitwell and Frank were in the cabin discussing the future.

Pomp and Barney had become reconciled, and had formed a little plan for some good sport for the night.

They called Cable forward and Barney said:

"Do ye moind watchin' out fer the deck fer us a little while, me frind? We've a little bit of an engagement down forninst the mountain here."

"If yo'll des be kind enough, sah, we'll do as much fo' yo' some time, sah," rejoined Pomp.

"Why of course I will," agreed Cable, readily. "Go right along, shipmates. Mum's the word."

Not knowing what they might have to encounter Barney and Pomp armed themselves with revolvers and then left the air-ship.

The moon was just coming up and illuminating the landscape. But Cable set the search light so that they could see their way out of the crater.

The two roysterers in search of fun made their way out of the crater and began to descend the mountain.

At its base while the air-ship had been seeking a place to light, the astute rascals had spied a small inn, just about an hour's walk from the air-ship.

Both anticipated finding a genial host and some good wine, and their spirits were high as they went on.

Everybody is aware what an antipathy the Hibernian has for the Italian. They are ever sworn foes. But Barney being in a good humor, began a dissertation eulogistic of the land of the Dago.

"Troth, an' I believe it be the finest climate in the worruld, and the foinest counthry, savin' dear old Erin. I'm quite in love wid it, an' if I cud foind a swate leetle crather of an Eyetalian gurl I moight sthay here an' live the resht of me loife amidst the orange threes and the vinyards which Saint Paul and His Holidess both av thim loiked so well."

But now they were in sight of the inn.

It was a quaint little structure, like the mountain hostleries described by the old-time novelists.

There was a light at the lattice window, and as Barney and Pomp drew near they heard the sound of female laughter beyond.

Both came to a halt.

"Begorra, rap onct on the door," suggested Barney.

"Sho! dat's no way fo' to do it, chile."

"What wud yez be afther doin' then, naygur."

"Yo' jes creeps up to dat winder an' peep in 'ish. Dat's de bes' ting we kin do."

"Done!" exclaimed Barney. "Yez hev a big head fer onct, naygur."

The Hibernian accordingly crept up to the lattice and looked in.

The scene which they beheld was an enticing one.

The room was large and cheerful. A wood fire burned on a hearth. Three females were visible, two quite pretty Italian girls and an elderly woman, doubtless their mother.

"Begorra!" muttered Barney. "Now's me toime, Oi'll shine up to the wan on the left an' yez can make the other. Cum an, naygur."

Before Pomp had an opportunity to advance any argument Barney advanced and rapped on the door.

It was flung open and the Italian woman stood on the threshold. She regarded the two visitors with astonishment.

Barney bowed obsequiously, and said:

"If yez plaze, fair lady, two lone travelers would ax ye to take them in, an' if yez can give us a bite of somethin' to ate an' dhrink. The woman stood and gazed at the visitors blankly. Then she made an unintelligible answer.

The truth dawned upon Barney.

"Begorra it's thick-headed I am," he exclaimed. "Af course she can't talk English. Well, I'll thry Parisian French thin."

Barney had acquired a smattering of French, and he managed to make a sentence.

"Is this an inn, mum?"

The woman's face lit up, and she replied in excellent French.

"Signors, you are welcome. Have you traveled far?"

"Troth an' we have, an' it's dhry and hungry we are," falsified Barney.

Pomp was regarded by the tavern mistress with something of aversion on account of his color. But Barney at once received attention galore.

The mistress's daughters, if such the two Italian signorinas were,

engaged him in conversation, and Barney became quite attentive to both. This excluded Pomp, who grumbled:

"Do yo' tink dat am de fair ting, to monopoligate de sassiety ob de hull room, I fish?"

"Begorra if yez can't make yerself winning tain't no fault of mine," spluttered Barney. "Go in an' win, ye no good wall flower yez."

Thus adjured Pomp made the attempt. But the Italian girls ignored him and vied with each other in their attentions to Barney.

The jolly son of Erin pitched in for a good time. He proceeded to make himself at home and sang Irish songs and cracked jokes with great gusto.

He called for wine and drank with the Italian beauties, displaying quite a sum of English gold.

Had he noted the strange gleam in the hostess' eyes as he did this, he might have proceeded with more caution and reserve.

Time went on. The merry-making continued when Barney proposed a dance. He had just taken a fair partner for a reel when a shrill whistle sounded outside the inn.

The door swung open and half a dozen of the most villainous-looking banditti in all Italy stood upon the threshold.

Every man was armed to the teeth, and the dance stopped. Barney's hair rose as with an electric thrill. The fun was over, and our gay roysterers from the air ship suddenly found themselves face to face with a mighty peril.

## CHAPTER V.

### A BRAVE RESCUE.

THE seemingly-hospitable inn was really the headquarters of a banditti. Barney and Pomp had struck the wrong place.

Pomp would have turned white had it been possible, and Barney was so taken aback and terror-struck that he could not act for some moments.

The leader of the bandits stood in the doorway and glared wolfishly at the two visitors.

Barney's enticing female partners had left him for the far end of the room. It was a remarkable turning of tables.

"Teresa!" exclaimed the bandit chief, sternly addressing the woman in Italian, "who are these strangers?"

"Luigi, my husband, they are Anglais," replied the woman, "and our prey. They have good Anglais gold."

A savage smile contorted the bandit's face, and he stepped into the inn.

"So?" he exclaimed, jubilantly. "You have done well, Teresa. Sirs, it is your gold we will have or your lives. Dare not resist Luigi Contarini. It is death!"

Of course neither Pomp nor Barney understood the words, but the gestures made the matter plain to them.

Barney managed to mutter to Pomp:

"Bad cess to the blatherskite. He's got us by the short wool this toime. What wud ye do, naygur? Wud ye surrinder?"

"I reckon if we do we nebber see Marse Frank nor de air ship any mo'. Hab yo' got yo' pistol wif yo'?"

"That I have."

"Den les make some sort of a fight fo' it."

Neither Barney nor Pomp were cowards. They had been in too many thrilling experiences with Frank Reade, Jr., to know fear.

So Barney quick as a flash drew his revolver. Pomp did the same and covered the bandits. There was a tremendous commotion among the cowardly Italians, and they beat a retreat out of the inn.

But not before a couple of shots had been fired at the two intended victims.

Fortunately not one of the shots took effect, but it was the opening of the fight.

Neither Barney nor Pomp now hesitated to return the shots. It was certain that the bandits meant to kill them so it was really in self-defense that they fired.

Bang! Bang!

The shots rang out quick and sharp. One of the bandits dropped with a bullet in his shoulder. The women screamed, and Barney and Pomp made a dash for the door.

It was their wonderful pluck and resolution that saved them.

The bandits for a moment fell back before the fusillade. Three of their number fell to the ground.

This enabled Barney and Pomp to gain the outer air.

For the moment they were victorious, but they could not hope to hold this vantage against such odds.

Now that they were in the open air, they could see the number of the bandits was legion. Fully half a hundred of them were about the place.

They were recovering now from their repulse and with wild yells rushed upon our two adventurers.

Realizing that discretion was valor's better part, both Barney and Pomp fled incontinently, making no pretense to stand.

The bandits came hot-foot after them. An exciting chase ensued.

It was a miracle, indeed, that of the score of shots sent after them none struck our adventurers.

One bullet passed through Barney's sleeve and another grazed Pomp's wool. The others luckily went wild.

"For the love of Heaven, Pomp me boy," cried Barney as they ran on wildly, "We must git out of here. Bejabers, I'm afraid we'll be killed inoifirely."

"I 'clar to goodness I done wish we had nebber left de air-ship," replied Pomp. "Marse Frank won't like dis one bit."

"I wisht I was back in ould Ameriky," cried the excited Hibernian. "I don't loike the bloody Eytalians onyway. If the spalpeens warn't as thick as the sthars, be me sowl I'd stand an' fight it out wid 'em."

Barney's ideas of Italy were now completely transformed. All owing to a radical changing of circumstances.

It was fearful work climbing the mountain side at such a rate of speed.

But pretty soon the gleam of the search light was seen. The next moment both Barney and Pomp were in its pathway.

As chance had it Jim Cable was on the lookout and saw Barney and Pomp coming along the pathway of light.

Also in their rear the pursuing bandits suddenly put in an appearance. This was enough for the sailor. He understood the situation at a glance.

He knew that should the bandits gain a foothold on the air-ship much damage might be done.

In the bow was the swivel gun which Frank Reade, Jr., had invented some years before, and which was capable of throwing an electric bolt a great distance with frightful results.

Without going to arouse Frank or Whitwell, whom he knew to be asleep below stairs, he rushed to the gun.

He had been taught how to use it. It was a moment's work to swing it around and bring it to bear upon the bandits.

But a chilling truth in the shape of a sudden remembrance burst upon Cable.

It was quite impossible to fire the gun unless it was connected with the dynamos. These were entirely disconnected and defunct. The gun could not be fired.

What was to be done?

He was upon the point of rushing below to call Frank Reade, Jr., when a sudden idea occurred to him.

He remembered the automatic cage or netting of steel which could be drawn over the air-ship's deck at a moment's notice.

He quickly went to work to raise this. In a few moments he had it in place and was holding the little steel door open for Barney and Pomp to enter.

They came up completely winded and burst in upon the air-ship's deck. Cable then closed the door which locked automatically.

Then he seized a gun and let drive at the bandits.

In spite of their exhaustion Barney and Pomp managed to get upon their feet and use their revolvers.

Under this heavy fire the bandits came to a halt.

At this moment also Frank and Whitwell came up from below. A few words explained the situation, and armed with repeating Winchester those on board the air-ship drove the enemy back.

The bandits retired beyond the pale of the search light.

Now that the fight was over for the time Barney and Pomp came in for a lecture from Frank for having left the air-ship.

Both felt somewhat downcast and sheepish, and Barney ventured to say:

"Arrah, sir, an' divil a step wud I hev went from the ship but fer the warruds ye made about the inn on the mountain solde. Bad cess to the bloody Eytalians. It's not long they'd live on the ould sod with their murderous worruk."

"Well, I was partly to blame," agreed Frank candidly. "But hereafter take no chances. Remember that you're in a foreign land."

"Shure, I will that, sorr. Br-r-r-u-u! but I'd loike to git a wipe at the bloody pirates on even ground, that I would."

The bandits did not return to the attack that night, though a watch was kept on the deck of the air ship.

The next morning the vicinity was made plainer, and they could see rugged heights all about them.

It was a likely place for a bandit's home. There was no doubt but that the miscreants were even then at that moment lurking about the crater.

Frank Reade, Jr., now went to work repairing the broken journal. A new one was put in its place and properly oiled.

This took some time, and twilight was again at hand when the air ship was once more ready to start.

At this juncture a startling discovery was made by Jim Cable.

An enormous number of the bandits was creeping up behind rocks in the rear to make an attack on the air ship.

All armed themselves with Winchester and awaited the attack.

Suddenly a white rag tied to a stick was waved from behind a rock. Frank Reade, Jr., answered the truce signal.

Then a man tall and swarthy, and a good type of ruffian, advanced across the open space.

He came up to the netting, and, doffing his hat, fixed his little black, bead-like eyes upon Frank, and said in French:

"Luigi Contarini demands tribute. You are on his land."

"Indeed!" replied Frank in the same language. "Do you own this mountain?"

"I do," replied Contarini.

"How much tribute do you want?"

"Ten thousand francs."

"You are modest."

"Signor?"

"What if we do not pay it?"

"Then you must die!"

"All right," said Frank carelessly. "We have got to die some time."

"Signor better pay."

Frank turned a keen glance upon the ruffian and exclaimed in a thundering tone:

"You miserable limb of Satan, if you don't betake yourself away from here in two seconds, I'll rid the earth of a consummate scoundrel. I can blow you and your gang into eternity. Now take my warning."

Evidently Contarini was incredulous. His keen black eyes took in all the appointments of the air-ship curiously.

"Then signor will not pay?" he asked.

"No."

Contarini turned and walked back to cover. Then a wild shout went up, and a hundred of the bandits came charging across the open space.

"Stand firm. Give it to 'em!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., as all aimed their Winchesters through the netting.

A tremendous volley was given, followed by others, just as rapidly as the twenty-four shot guns could be fired.

The bandits were mowed down like sheep. Their mad rush carried them to the wire netting. This they tried to force, but it was in vain.

They were beaten back, and in retreating, Frank Reade, Jr., sprung to the engine-room and started the dynamos.

The air-ship began to rise, and went swiftly up into the air.

This was too much for the superstitious Italians, who never dreamed that the strange ship could really float in the air. They gazed at the spectacle aghast.

Barney threw an electric bomb down to remind them that they were in a dangerous position.

It exploded with tremendous force, and the bandits scattered in terror.

Then the air-ship started on her flight across the Mediterranean. Darkness was coming on, but this did not matter, as there was no danger of collision in the air.

The search light threw a powerful radiance ahead and below.

In its path upon the gleaming and tossing waters of the sea, ships could be very often seen to cross and recross. It was a novel and wonderful spectacle.

Jim Cable was fond of crouching in the bow of the air-ship, and watching the fleeting panorama below.

Upon the present night he was in his favorite position. It was hardly possible for him at the distance, to tell in the rays of the search light to what nationality the different ships belonged.

But he fancied that he detected several carrying the American flag. Had it been daylight he would have been tempted to fire a salute with his rifle.

Barney and Pomp were in the pilot-house discussing their experiences at the Italian inn. Frank Reade, Jr., and Washington Whitwell were seated near one of the rotascope shafts, enjoying cigars and a pleasant chat.

Suddenly, beyond the far-reaching rays of the search-light, Jim Cable beheld an appalling sight.

A ship of many tons burden was on fire, and the flames were leaping into the air like demons, a hundred feet high. It was an awful spectacle.

The sailor sprang to his feet, and a great cry of alarm went up from his throat. It was heard by Frank Reade, Jr., and Washington Whitwell, who sprang to their feet.

"What was that?" exclaimed Whitwell.

"It sounded like Cable's voice," said Frank Reade, Jr. "What can have happened?"

Both ran rapidly forward.

There they came upon Cable gazing with horror upon the scene of desolation below. The burning ship was now fully within the radius of the search light.

It could be plainly seen that she was doomed. No power on earth could save her.

"My soul!" gasped Frank Reade, Jr., with a thrill. "That is awful. But what of the poor wretches on board. They must all perish."

"Some of them may be floating in the sea," ejaculated Whitwell. "Had we ought to risk a descent?"

"We would be inhuman not to go to the rescue of human life," declared Frank Reade, Jr., earnestly. "Cable, tell Barney to check the rotascopes and let the ship sink."

Jim Cable needed no second bidding.

In a few seconds the air-ship began to descend at a safe distance from the burning ship. When within a dozen feet of the sea, the propeller was checked and the air-ship permitted to hang suspended there.

Then all stood ready with life lines. The sea was strewn with debris from the burning ship, but singularly enough they could see no human being anywhere.

Had they all perished in the ship's cabin?

If so, what a horrible holocaust it was. But Frank Reade, Jr., would not abandon the idea that there were survivors. The propeller was gently started and the air-ship began to make a circuit of the burning ship.

The search light was thrown in every direction and suddenly Cable gave a great cry.

"There they are, shipmates, two points off the bow. Steady at the wheel."

Sure enough, clinging to an upturned boat were two forms now revealed as those of a man and woman.

Frank Reade, Jr., caused the air-ship to move in that direction. When directly over the two survivors a couple of lines were thrown out, and Frank shouted down:

"Ahoy, there! Can you catch the line?"

"All right," came back the reply in a voice which assured the

young inventor that the owner was capable of holding out for some time yet.

The rope was fastened under the woman's arms by the man on the upturned boat, and she was quickly drawn up and aboard the air-ship. The man himself came next.

Their wonderment at sight of the air-ship and its occupants was great.

The man, who was from appearance, a seafaring man, stood with mouth agape gazing about the deck.

"Well, blow me!" he exclaimed in sheer amazement. "I've seen queer sights, but never a-one like this. What sort of a craft is this that ye can sail over the water as well as on it, I'd like to know."

"This is an air-ship, sir," replied Frank, with a laugh. "I can imagine you have never seen one before."

"An air-ship," muttered the dazed man. "I don't know but I am dreaming. Pra'ps I am, I've captained some good ships in my day, but I never fell in with a craft like this afore."

"Were you the captain of that burning ship?" asked Frank.

"I was."

"And this lady—"

"Is my wife. My name is Frazer, sir. Eben Frazer, and my ship was the Ellen from Boston. But I reckon she'll ride the seas no more."

"Then you are an American?"

"Yes, but who are you?"

"I am Frank Reade Jr."

"Never heard of you," said Captain Frazer, bluffly. "But here's my hand, friend. I'm glad to meet you."

Frank noticed that the woman was weeping, and seemed distraught. He imagined that it was owing to the misfortune of having lost their ship. But it was in reality from a far different cause as he soon learned.

"But where are the others?" asked Frank. "Are you the only survivors?"

"No," replied Captain Frazer. "I'll have to explain that matter a bit. You see, friend, my wife feels powerful bad. So do I, myself, though I mayn't show it as much."

"We were en route for Messina and stopped at Gibraltar for water. Seven of my crew deserted, and I had to take on board half a dozen Moors whom you know are treacherous rascals."

"Among them was one Mohmond, a vindictive, scheming fellow. He pretended to fall in love with our daughter, Alice, just nineteen years old. She, of course, rejected his advances and I warned him. As a result he formed a mutiny, overpowered and killed my four American sailors. They bound my wife and I to staples in the hold and set the ship on fire, leaving it in the long boat. I believe the Algiers coast is not far distant. Mohmond has taken Alice with him and—and—oh, God! I think I shall go mad with the horror of the thing. We are ruined and our happiness is lost."

The old captain bowed his head and sobbed as only a strong man can. Those who heard him were deeply touched.

"Begorra, I'm in fer chasin' ther haythins and extarminatin' of 'em, Mистер Frank."

"That is the most dreadful outrage I ever heard of," exclaimed Washington Whitwell.

"Golly! des gib dis yer coon a chance, Marse Frank, an' I'll butt de life out ob dem. Yo' kin jes bet I will," and Pomp shook his redoubtable head suggestively.

Jim Cable said nothing, but his eyes flashed and his thin lips compressed tightly.

"But how did you escape being burned alive in the ship, Captain Frazer?" asked Frank.

"I managed to slip out of my bonds," declared the captain. "Then I liberated Mary, and we jumped overboard through one of the ports. But for you the sharks would surely have had us before morning."

Frank Reade, Jr., was inactive but a moment. He turned to Barney and said:

"Raise the ship about twenty feet, Barney. Throw out both search lights front and amidships, and go ahead as fast as you can. If it is possible to catch those scoundrels I will do it."

With a wild scream Mrs. Frazer threw herself at the young inventor's feet.

"Oh, Heaven will bless you," she cried. "If you will only save my darling child."

"I will promise nothing," said Frank, in a kindly tone. "But I will certainly try, my dear madame."

But before another word could be spoken, there was a sudden wild shrieking note of a whistle to the left, and all turned to view a most horrible impending catastrophe. It was a sight calculated to freeze one's marrow.

Red and blue lights flashed out of the gloom, and the leviathan proportions of a steamer loomed into view, and seemed certain to strike the air-ship at its elevation of only twelve feet and rend it to pieces.

It seemed as if no power could save the air-ship then.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FIGHT WITH THE MOORS.

BUT as good fortune had it, Barney's hand was at that moment upon the electric button. Also from the glass window of the pilot-house he had seen the peril coming.

He knew that by giving the rotascopes the full power of the dynamos at one shock, the air-ship would leap upward like a bird.

Barney in time of danger was always quick and cool. His nerves did not fail him now.

"Mither of Moses!" he gasped. "It's an ocean steamer. Whisht! We've a close shave on it now, I reckon, but I'll thry it!"

Frank Reade, Jr. believed in that moment that his pet air-ship was lost, and gave a deep groan.

But at that instant, in the briefest second of time, the air-ship gave a mighty leap upwards. The steamer passed underneath in the daylight glare of the electric light, while her topmost just grazed the bottom of the air-ship.

It was a narrow escape.

But the air-ship was saved. Frank Reade, Jr., delirious with joy, rushed into the pilot-house and embraced Barney.

"You are a quick-witted, brave fellow, Barney!" cried the young inventor, joyfully. "You have saved the air-ship."

"Be me sowl, I niver expected to do it," declared Barney, frankly. "I thought as how it was the lasht of us ontirely."

There was but limited time for rejoicing, however. Now that the peril was over, all began to keep a lookout for the long boat and the traitorous abductors of Alice Frazer.

The search-light swept the sea in every direction, as the air-ship went on in the quest.

Captain Frazer paced the deck feverishly, and Mrs. Frazer, murmuring prayers, sat in a chair by the rail.

Daylight was appearing in the east, when suddenly the barren coast line was brought to view.

The air-ship, stealing along swiftly, approached the shore.

It was a bleak, barren, and uninhabited spot. Not a sign of human habitation was to be seen anywhere.

Suddenly Jim Cable cried:

"Avast, there, shipmates. There she blows dead ahead."

Instantly Frank Reade, Jr., sprang to the air-ship's bow with a glass.

He could descry a boat just in the act of landing.

Six men and a female were on the sands, having left the boat now. There was no doubt but that it was the treacherous party of Algerians.

The mutineers seemed overwhelmed at sight of the air-ship. They gazed at it in superstitious horror for a few moments, and then incontinently fled up the steep bluffs, dragging the young girl with them.

But the air-ship gained on them, and, sailing over the bluff, cut off their retreat. Frank Reade, Jr. gave Barney the signal and the ship settled lightly down upon the earth with hardly a jar.

"Now, all hands!" cried Frank, seizing a Winchester and leaving the air-ship. "Come on for quick work. They may do the girl harm if we do not bring them to terms quickly."

All except Barney and the captain's wife left the air-ship.

Separating to the right and left, the party of rescuers closed in on the Moors. Pomp sent in a shot which tumbled one of them over.

Dismayed, the mutineers now retreated along the cliff.

But the rescuers pursued them closely. However, now that their superstition was allayed, the Moors seemed disposed to show fight as they saw that their pursuers were flesh and blood and not spirits.

They turned and made a stand, firing with their revolvers.

As it was quite a long range no harm could be done.

Our friends could have easily annihilated them with the Winchesters, but they now adopted an old but effective device.

This was to keep the form of Alice before them so that a shot would be almost certain to strike her.

In view of this fact Captain Frazer in agony begged them not to fire.

But they were closing in rapidly upon the miscreants when a startling development occurred.

Suddenly from behind a sand-hill a party of horsemen appeared. They were half a hundred strong, and Frank at once recognized them as a lawless gang of Algerian bandits or Bedouins.

"My soul!" he gasped. "If we save her we must do it quickly, or we will never get back to the air-ship alive."

He flung his rifle to his shoulder and risked a shot at the Moors.

One of them fell.

Only four were left. If they could be overtaken now there was a chance of escape; but the cavalcade was coming on rapidly.

"Now or never!" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., resolutely, as he ran forward swiftly.

Pomp was by his side. As good fortune had it, the ruffians had exhausted their ammunition and could not fire upon their pursuers.

Frank Reade, Jr., was the first to reach them. One of the Moors, seeing that the game was lost, drew a knife and rushed upon Alice.

But Frank drew aim quickly and sent a ball crashing through his skull.

Pomp butted one of them into insensibility with his woolly head. Alice, now freed, rushed to safety into her father's arms.

The other two Moors fled incontinently. Our friends did not pursue. The rescue of Alice had been their prime object, and this accomplished they now started back for the air-ship.

But the Algerian bandits had seen them and swept down between them and the air-ship.

They were cut off.

A horrible fate now faced them. They knew it meant death to fall into the power of those unscrupulous ruffians.

Frank Reade, Jr., was in a quandary. Ever cool in the face of danger he now turned deathly pale.

"This a bad position," he muttered. "We must get out of it in some way."

But how? The bandits were between them and the air-ship. It was plain that they could not hope to do battle successfully against such odds.

"Stand fast, boys!" cried Frank. "We will show them how Americans die!"

"Aye!" cried Captain Frazer, as he clutched the barrel of his Winchester. "That we will."

A volley from the rifles now brought three of the Algerines from their saddles. With wild yells, however they came on to the charge.

It was evident that they intended to annihilate the party on foot before venturing to attack the air ship.

That they would certainly have been destroyed was a certain fact had it not been for Jim Cable.

The plucky castaway had hit upon a scheme which now proved the salvation of our friends.

Jim remembered suddenly that the Moors in landing had of course left their boat upon the beach. If they could reach this and put out to sea they could elude the foe, and Barney might escape with the air ship if he saw the point in time.

It required but a few words for Jim to explain this matter to Frank Reade, Jr.

To act upon it was but a moment's work. Back to the edge of the cliff they fell, holding the foe momentarily at bay with the rapid firing Winchesters.

Down the cliff path they now scrambled and to the water's edge.

A yell of baffled rage came from the Algerines, and they sent a rattling volley after the fugitives.

Captain Frazer was wounded slightly in the shoulder. Pomp had a bit of wool cut from his head, and Frank Reade Jr. had four bullet holes in his coat to prove the claim of a charmed life.

But they were now in the boat and pulling like mad for the open sea. The foe could not pursue, but sent volley after volley after them, without effect, however.

"Now, if Barney will only act!" Frank Reade, Jr., exclaimed nervously, but the words had scarcely left his lips when the air ship was seen to rise in the air and float over the cliffs.

The Algerines gazed at the spectacle aghast. Firmly convinced that the feat was one that could only be accomplished by supernatural means, and fearful of Mahomet's displeasure they gave utterance to wild yells of terror, and, turning their horses' heads, incontinently fled.

Once they were out of sight and the coast was clear the long boat was pulled to the shore and the air ship descended.

In a few moments all were safely on its deck and congratulating each other upon their lucky escape.

The meeting between Mrs. Frazer and her daughter was an affecting one, and the old captain came to Frank Reade, Jr., and took his hand in a warm clasp, saying:

"I shall never be able to repay you for the service you have done me. But you have my undying gratitude."

"Sir," said Frank warmly, "I am only too glad to have been able to save your life, and your wife and daughter as well. It is nothing." But the question now arose—what could the Frazers do? They could not hope reach a point of safety if they left the air-ship here.

To accompany the explorers on their trip to the sea of sand was out of the question.

Fortunately a solution of the problem was near at hand.

A sudden startled cry escaped Pomp. At the same moment the boom of a cannon echoed across the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

Those on board the air-ship saw a stately ship of war, flying the Italian flag, suddenly come around a headland. The cannon had been fired as a salute to the air-ship.

The explorers answered with a volley from their Winchesters, and the iron-clad hove to. As those on board the air-ship, with the exception of Barney and Pomp, went down to the water's edge, a boat was seen to leave the war ship.

A few moments later it grounded upon the beach.

An officer stepped out and made a polite salute. He was a dark and handsome Italian with a fine mustache.

He spoke first in Italian, but Frank Reade, Jr., addressed him in French.

Fortunately he could speak that as well, so an understanding was quickly arrived at.

It seemed that the air-ship had been sighted far at sea by the war-ship, while Barney had kept it suspended over the cliffs and the Italian commander had determined to solve the mystery of such a wonderful spectacle.

At first he had counted it a mirage, and expected to find that it was such, but was astounded to learn that it was nothing of the kind.

His amazement was great when invited by Frank Reade, Jr., he went on board the air-ship.

Frank gave the signal to Barney and the air-ship rose into the air a hundred feet. The Italian officer turned pale but was too brave to outwardly show fear.

"It is wonderful, Signor Americano," he said in French. "Nothing like it has ever been seen in this part of the world, I can assure you."

They returned later to the cliff where the story of Captain Frazer's rescue was related. As a result arrangements were made by which the captain, his wife and daughter were to be taken aboard the war-ship and landed in Naples.

This settled the problem quite nicely and the captain and his wife and daughter went aboard the war-ship.

But all thanked the young inventor with tears in their eyes for the great service done them. Then the warship made an offing for the little bay, and put to sea.

Frank Reade, Jr., now turned, saying:

"All aboard once more. No more stops, I hope, until we reach the Sea of Sand."

A cheer went up, and Barney and Pomp started on a run for the deck of the air-ship.

Finding that Pomp was out-footing him, Barney threw one foot out, tripping the darkey up. Pomp went down upon his head, turned a somersault, but was quickly on his feet.

"I 'clar to goodness ef I don' catch dat 'fishman and bust his jaw," he yelled at the top of his voice.

After Barney he went, but for once the Celt was too many for him, and found a place of safety in the pilot-house, locking the door after him.

Pomp had to content himself with blackguarding his adversary, and shaking a fist at him through the glass.

As all were on board now, Barney started the rotascopes, and the air-ship arose high in the air.

Just as they reached an elevation of a thousand feet, those on deck could look down and see the superstitious Algerines, who had been hovering behind a range of small hills, fleeing as if for their lives.

Pomp took his Winchester and sent several shots after them, but they were far beyond range now.

Rising to the altitude of half a mile, the air-ship set a course directly across Algiers.

A strange and wonderful country was crossed in this way. It was not long before a distant white line was visible.

At last the great Sahara was in sight. A fearful glistening arid expanse it was. Before long the air-ship was sailing over it.

Washington Whitwell was pacing the deck in deep meditation. Frank Reade, Jr. was in the cabin studying a chart. Jim Cable was shining up some of the brass work and Barney was in the pilot-house, when a great cry came from Pomp.

He was in the bow of the air-ship and had been scanning the horizon, when an object caught his view.

It was in the air about a mile above the plain, and was drifting towards the air-ship.

It did not require a second glance for Pomp to recognize it as a balloon. Merciful Powers! A balloon hovering over the Sahara. What wonderful thing was this?

Pomp scratched his wool a moment in sheer bewilderment, and then shouted lustily:

"Marse Frank, come here as quick as yo' can. I do 'clar to goodness if it ain't jes' de strangest 'ting I eber heerd ob."

Although Frank Reade, Jr., was in the cabin he heard Pomp's cry, and hastened to come upon deck.

"What is the matter now, Pomp?" he asked, coming forward.

The darkey's eyes stuck out of his head like bulging agates. Pomp was excited.

"Fo' de good Lor' Marse Frank, do look at dat balloon out dar."

"A balloon!" ejaculated Frank Reade, Jr., in sheerest amazement.

"What do you mean?"

"Dat's a fac', Marse Frank. A solemn scriptural fac'. Des yo' see fo' yo'self."

There was no mistaking the fact that the distant object was a balloon. The young inventor was amazed.

He studied the balloon for some moments with his glass.

"As I live it is a real balloon," he shouted finally. "And I can see two occupants, a man and a woman. Barney, change the air-ship's course in that direction, and we will interview the aeronauts who dare to venture across the Sahara in this manner."

Barney promptly obeyed.

From the glass pilot-house he could see the balloon quite plainly. The air-ship bore down for it rapidly.

All were in the bow watching the balloon and exchanging remarks upon the subject. Frank Reade, Jr. was intent only on reaching the balloon as quickly as possible.

So it happened that a great peril arose in their rear which was not seen until it was almost upon them.

Then Barney chanced to gaze back over the desert. It was not his first experience in the Sahara, they having crossed it once before in the trip to Africa.

A great cry of alarm escaped his lips.

"Och, Misther Frank!" he bawled. "Wud yez luke asthern and say phwat iver is a comin.' Be jabbers, it lukes as if the hull ground wuz comin' up."

Barney's smile was not a bad one. A few miles in their rear the vast plain seemed heaving and tossing, and many hundred feet in the air was a mighty cloud of sand and wind whirling and rushing down upon them with the speed of a thunderbolt.

## CHAPTER VII.

### BEYOND THE SEA OF SAND.

FRANK READE, JR., had turned at Barney's cry and he saw quite plainly the mighty peril impending.

He comprehended its nature at once. With pale face but cool manner he sprang to the pilot house.

"It is the simoon, the sand storm of the desert," he cried. "Up, Barney, up—up! We must get above it."

All had heard of the terrible sand storm of the Sahara. To be caught in its whirling waterspout-like suction would mean the demolition of the air-ship and death for every person on board.

No wonder then that Barney was quick to act.

He set the rotascopes in motion quickly. Up went the air-ship like a bird, higher and higher.

Nearer swept the fearful sand storm. The next moment it caught the air-ship.

The ship was whirled aloft like a cork. Barney clung to the propeller valve, and Frank Reade Jr., came to his assistance.

"My God!" gasped the young inventor aghast. "We must be somewhere near the upper limit of this storm. Put on more of the current. Hang to it."

For a few brief seconds it seemed as if the air ship was doomed. But fortunately at that altitude it was the verge of the storm wave, and a moment later they emerged from the cloud of flying sand, and were above the tossing, heaving, furious mass. It was an awful spectacle.

The air ship had experienced a very narrow escape. But for Barney's prompt action it must surely have been demolished and the lives of all on board lost.

The deck was piled high with sand, and Pomp grumbled not a little at the prospective bit of work in clearing it off.

In a few minutes the sand storm passed, and the desert once more lay glittering below them.

But it lay in waves and wind rows of sand like the surface of a sea in a heavy gale. Far to the southward went the whirling pillars of sand, and they soon disappeared entirely beyond the horizon.

Not until this moment did any one think of the balloon.

It was no longer in sight.

What had become of it? Certainly if it was struck by the storm it was a thing of the past and the lives of its occupants must be lost.

Watch was kept of the plain below for some sign of the aeronauts' bodies, though for that matter they might be buried deep under the light shifting sands.

It was a horrible thought and depressed the spirits of all.

The sun now shone out powerful hot. Awnings were put up on the air ship's deck and the explorers all donned the lightest of clothing.

White duck suits and Indian cork hats.

Washington Whitwell was in the best of spirits, for every day now brought them nearer to the Sea of Sand.

After hovering over the vast desert for several days there came a change.

A rooky, hilly country was encountered and now there was signs of human habitations.

Wandering tribes of Bedouin were to be seen galloping over the plains below on their Arab steeds. Small towns, completely walled in were seen huddled here and there.

These town people seemed to be of an agricultural class.

They were to be seen out plowing the arid soil with half starved oxen and primitive plows. One and all at sight of the air-ship believing it a supernatural manifestation prostrated themselves upon the ground in terror.

At one place a pitched battle was being fought between an army of these people and fully a thousand Bedouins.

The ground was piled with the slain but at sight of the air ship both armies broke ranks and fled. It was a strange spectacle and our adventurers gazed upon it with the deepest of interest.

Frank Reade, Jr., did not venture to descend and make the acquaintance of these people.

He knew that such a move could be only fraught with incalculable danger. So the air ship kept on her way.

Once more they struck an arm of the desert.

Suddenly Whitwell called Frank Reade, Jr. to the rail and pointing to a valley they were just leaving, said:

"In that valley I spent a year in slavery. The Sheik-ul-Kodir had there his camp for a long while. We shall soon reach the borders of the mighty Sea of Sand."

This announcement aroused the interest of all on board.

The hills were left behind, and once more the air-ship hovered over the desert.

All that night the search light revealed nothing below but a waste of sand. But with the morning light Whitwell rushed upon deck and cried:

"Yonder is the Sea of Sand."

Neither Frank Reade, Jr., nor the others save Whitwell could see any material difference in the aspect of the sandy plain.

But Whitwell's experienced eye had seen it at once.

"If you will look closely," he said to Frank. "You will see an odd, bluish light, hovering in the air. Do you see it?"

"It is faintly perceptible," replied Frank Reade, Jr.

"Well, that hangs ever over the Sea of Sand. Just where it begins and where the terra firma leaves off I cannot tell myself."

"But will it be safe to descend here?" asked Frank.

"You can tell by dropping something heavy," replied Whitwell.

An iron weight was procured by Pomp and it was dropped over the air-ship's rail. It struck the ground firmly and showed that terra firma existed there.

The air-ship was accordingly allowed to descend, and rested upon the sands of the desert. Whitwell sprang out, and Frank Reade, Jr. with him.

"Now we will try and walk down to the edge of this strange sea," said Whitwell. "But we must proceed with great caution."

The iron weight, with a line attached, was used, and by throwing it ahead of them at intervals, it could be easily ascertained whether the ground was solid or not.

In this manner they kept on for almost a quarter of a mile.

Then the weight suddenly sank into the sand, which trembled and quivered like jelly for many yards beyond.

At last they had reached the Sea of Sand.

The wonderful object of their voyage had been partly gained. Frank Reade, Jr. had discovered and viewed many marvels in his day, but never a one like this.

It was almost past belief that such a freak of nature could exist.

And what a treacherous thing it was too.

To distinguish the terra firma from the quicksand was almost an impossibility. As Whitwell had declared, a fine white powder covered the quicksands, so that their moisture could not be very readily discerned.

Frank Reade Jr., tied a line about his waist and crept down to the verge of the mighty sea of quicksand.

He took some of it up in his hand, and it required but a moment's examination for him to recognize it as ordinary quicksand.

But that the vast mire of sand should cover such a mighty territory was a wonder indeed.

The young inventor gazed upon it with not a little of wonderment and awe.

"Upon my soul," he exclaimed positively. "If I had not been informed previously of the nature of this plain I should have without hesitation descended upon it with the air-ship."

"And the world would never have known the secret of the disappearance of Frank Reade Jr., and his air-ship," declared Whitwell. "You would never have been heard from again. Once those deadly sands clutch you in their embrace all is over. You can no more escape them than death itself."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Frank with a shiver. "I should like to know their depth."

"We can do that I think, by holding the air-ship suspended over the sands, and letting down an iron bar attached to a line."

"We will do it," declared Frank turning about.

But before he could take a step toward the air-ship a startled yell came from Barney who was at the rail.

But in the same moment the others caught sight of the danger.

Across the desert at full speed there was coming a party of mounted Bedouins.

Savage and wild indeed they looked with their long lances and scarlet hoods, swarthy features, and general air of wildness.

They were riding down upon our party of explorers. Frank Reade Jr., saw that the peril was a fearful one.

They had not taken their Winchester with them on leaving the air-ship.

Not apprehending any danger they had not thought of this. It now looked like a very serious mistake.

On came the Bedouins.

Barney was starting the rotascopes to move the air-ship nearer. But there did not seem time for our friends to reach it.

"Golly, Marse Frank, we am done for," gasped Pomp in terror.

Jim Cable said nothing, but gripped a knife in his belt. Even Frank was pale, but Washington Whitwell suddenly gave a great cry.

"Look! look!" he shouted. "What fools they are. They do not know of the deadly sea."

The words were not clear of his lips when an appalling spectacle was witnessed. Suddenly the entire band of a score of Bedouins vanished from sight in a twinkling, disappeared as by magic into the very ground seemingly.

They had unwittingly ridden full speed into the Sea of Sand, and were swallowed up as suddenly and mysteriously as if they had vanished into air.

It was a wonderful spectacle. In a second of time not one of the band was in sight.

Only a commotion of the jelly-like sands, which extended seemingly to the horizon line, attested to their fate.

Our adventurers gazed upon the scene aghast.

Frank Reade, Jr., experienced a deadly faintness and a weakness in the knees.

"My God, Whitwell," he exclaimed, "what a fearful sight that was. Let us get aboard the air-ship at once before we share their fate."

Whitwell was pallid as a ghost and trembling violently.

"Is it not a fearful thing?" he exclaimed. "The world holds not a parallel. Only God knows how many are buried in those awful depths. Whole armies may have found their fate there."

It was an awful thing to contemplate. With trembling limbs our adventurers hastened back to the air-ship.

By Frank Reade, Jr.'s, order Barney started the rotascopes and held the air-ship suspended over the quicksand.

Then Frank Reade, Jr., let down an iron bar on the end of a line one thousand feet in length.

Down went the bar through the treacherous sands. The line was played out rapidly and a slack did not come until over eight hundred feet had been given out.

"Eight hundred feet in this spot and not fifty feet from its verge," exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., in amazement. "Ugh! small hope of ever getting out of the Sea of Sand, once one gets in."

The air-ship was now headed across the Sea of Sand.

For hours it hovered over the treacherous waste, then Whitwell called Frank's attention to a distant mountain peak on the horizon.

"We must soon come to the inland continent!" he declared excitedly. "Ah! this is the crowning triumph of our lives, eh?"

"You are right," declared Frank Reade, Jr., earnestly. "I consider the Sea of Sand the greatest wonder of the world to-day."

"If one could penetrate its secrets, that wonderment would be increased," declared Whitwell. "Ah, many an unsuspecting traveler has gone to his fate in those treacherous depths."

"I do not wonder that the people of the inland continent are a lost race," declared Frank Reade, Jr. "Certainly this sea can be crossed by no other means than that of the air-ship."

"I was well aware of that," declared Washington Whitwell. "Now you can understand why I was so anxious to get you interested in the project. I knew that in no other way could the people of the inland continent be communicated with."

"It is all very wonderful."

"Ah, but I anticipate greater wonders yet. Only think of the novelty of encountering a race of people lost to the world!"

"It is great indeed."

"Of course it is."

The borders of the inland continent were now in sight. It could be seen easily where the Sea of Sand merged with the fertile soil of a wonderfully beautiful and picturesque region.

Waving palms, forests of cocoa and betel nut were visible. Giant oaks and pines and many trailing vines were on every hand.

The air was filled with singing birds, all with brilliant plumage.

A tiger's striped coat was seen in the depths of the forest: troops of monkeys chattered in the tree tops—all was tropical beauty and verdure.

The country was undulating and in parts mountainous.

Yet the soil seemed rich, and no part of Africa seemed so enticing. But darkness was coming on, and our adventurers knew that it was useless to look for human habitation until the next day.

Therefore Frank Reade, Jr. decided to descend and camp in the forest for the night. Accordingly the air-ship descended near a small stream which ran down the mountain side.

As there was no telling what wild beasts or even human foes might be prowling in the vicinity, the steel netting was run up and covered the deck.

Scarcely had this been done when a startling thing occurred.

A tremendous roar, which seemed to almost make the ground tremble, came from the depths of the forest.

The next moment a gigantic lion of ferocious mien bounded into view and lashing his tail glared at the air-ship. He sniffed the air a moment as if scenting his foes and then crouching down began to tear the earth up about him with his claws.

Jim Cable and Pomp stood awe-struck gazing at the king of beasts.

But Frank Reade, Jr., saw that it was too good a shot to lose and sent Barney after his Winchester.

"We'll try a shot at the beauty," he cried. "I declare if I ever saw so fine a specimen of a lion before."

Barney came back quickly with the Winchester. Placing the muzzle through the netting Frank Reade, Jr., took aim.

A sharp report followed and the king of beasts with a tremendous deafening roar leaped in the air.

The bullet had struck and surprised him.

He looked about madly for the cause of the blow, but saw no one save those on the air-ship's deck.

Again Frank fired and again the lion gave a roar of pain.

This time he came charging down upon the air-ship.

With mighty strides he crossed the intervening distance. With a leap he landed against the netting.

He struck it with tremendous power, and it seemed for a moment as if he would tear his way through it.

Whitwell instinctively sprang back while Tim Cable picked up an axe for defense. Pomp, usually brave and cool, retreated to the cabin stairs.

But the powerful steel netting could not be forced as easily as all this.

It resisted the best efforts of the lion who vainly tried to tear his way through it, while Frank Reade, Jr., fired shot after shot at the monster.

At last, completely riddled with balls, one bullet struck a vital part and the king of beasts fell backward upon the ground.

He writhed a few moments in a death struggle and then lay still. He was dead for a certainty.

Frank Reade, Jr., opened the wire door and emerged. He bent down and felt of the lion's coat.

"Good!" he cried, joyfully. "This is not a man-eater, and his fur is good. I never found a more silky coat."

"Are not the man-eater's skins worth preserving?" asked Whitwell. "No," replied Frank Reade, Jr. "They are mangy and worthless."

"By Jove, that is a fine skin."

"Aye, and I mean that it, with the animal's head preserved, shall be spread in my wife's boudoir at home. She will be delighted with it."

"And well she may," declared Washington Whitwell.

Barney and Pomp with skilled hands speedily skinned the lion. The operation, however, had hardly been completed, when another and greater danger presented itself.

On the other side of the stream was a deep jungle.

Just as the last rays of the sun were gilding the tree tops, a prodigious snort was heard from the jungle, and then the sound of tremendously heavy footfalls.

The next moment a huge object, seemingly large enough for a small hill top, loomed up over the jungle grass.

It was a gigantic object, and if an animal certainly the largest specimen any there had ever seen.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr. "What do you call it?"

The next moment all stood spell bound with amazement. Such a spectacle none there had ever seen before.

The object was clear of the jungle now, and was revealed as a mighty nondescript monster almost half again as large as the famous elephant Jumbo, once exhibited by the great circuses of the United States.

In many respects the animal resembled an elephant.

His bulky body was covered with the same thick elastic hide, tons upon tons of flesh sagging underneath.

The head resembled an elephant's with the exception that the tusks of ivory reached downward instead of upward, and curled up by the shoulder in fanciful scrolls.

The trunk was prodigious in length, and thick, bushy hair like the bristles of a boar covered the creature's head.

"What is it?" gasped Washington Whitwell. "Heavens, Mr. Reade, what manner of country have we encountered?"

"Golly, it am de bigges' critter I ebber seed!" gasped Pomp. "It am as big as a house. Good Lor', Marse Frank, I bleebe we am in de debil's country fo' suah!"

"Howly Vargin purtect me!" gasped Barney, beginning mentally to call upon his patron saint. "If the cratter takes any one off this ship, let it be the naygur an' not me. Saint Pether preserve me! I ain't ready to die yit bejavers."

"There'll be nothing left of the ship, messmates, if that whale on land makes a whack at it with his flukes," declared Jim Cable.

But Frank Reade, Jr., always cooler and deeper of penetration, believed he understood the creature's character at once.

He was aware that he was in a part of the world never before visited by one of his own people.

That the wonders of this country should seem exaggerated to them was nothing more than one might expect.

He knew that this monster must belong to some leviathan species of animal extinct in other parts of the world.

"It is a species of the megotherim," he declared, positively. "They were of gigantic size, as their bones found in different parts of the civilized world will attest."

"The megotherim!" gasped Whitwell, with white face. "Well, I'm inclined to believe that we are not in the race with his mightiness. I think we had better switch off."

"What would not the scientists of the civilized world give to behold this monster?" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., who did not seem disposed to regard the leviathan with fear. "We are certainly the only Americans who ever beheld one in the flesh."

"That's all right," urged Whitwell. "But I would suggest that we give the critter a wide berth."

"I done t'ink so to," agreed Pomp.

But Frank Reade, Jr., only laughed.

The megatherium, if such it was, had now caught sight of the air-ship. He stood regarding it with seeming astonishment, flourishing his huge trunk the while.

Frank Reade, Jr., had conceived a daring plan to capture and destroy the monster. He turned to Barney.

"Get me three hundred feet of wire," he said sharply. "Connect one end with the dynamos, but don't turn on the current. Then prepare to go with me."

Barney dared not disobey when spoken to in that tone.

He hastened away in obedience. When he returned with the wire Frank took one end of it and left the air-ship.

The wire was placed at a height of ten feet from the ground along the bank of the stream, and fastened at intervals to glass insulators placed upon trees.

Then the other end of the wire was brought back to the air ship, making a complete circuit.

As the wire was now insulated at the proper points, Frank Reade, Jr., turned on the dynamos to the full limit of volts. All this while the megotherim had been stupidly regarding the air ship.

"Now for some fun," cried the young inventor. "Stand ready everybody."

Picking up a Winchester, Frank took good aim at the creature's trunk. The bullet sped true to its mark.

It was the animal's trunk that Frank feared more than anything else. The shot caused the blood to spurt forth, and brought a roar of pain from the leviathan.

Then the megotherim made a dash forward across the stream.

Two strides were enough to enable the monster to cross. It came over the bank in another stride.

Then its bulk came in contact with the air. What a fearful powerful agent is electricity.

Even the immense weight and force of the megotherim was arrested and hurled back. The shock was a tremendous one, enough to have killed a thousand men.

But the megotherim came again to the attack, but less resolutely, and this time fell in a lifeless heap across the wire.

The smell of sizzling meat filled the air, but Frank Reade, Jr., satisfied that the creature was dead, shut off the current.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "I can safely say that we are the only Americans who can truly boast of having killed a megotherim."

Now that the danger was over the spirits of all arose.

All left the air-ship and went forward to inspect the megotherim. In doing this they were forgetful of one important fact.

Frank Reade, Jr. had shut the current from the wire but had failed to check the dynamos.

But a strange fate, the little lever fell into the slot and connected the current with the rotoscopes.

In an instant the air-ship sprang into the air, going upwards like a rocket and not a soul was aboard of her.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THRILLING ADVENTURES.

THE instantaneous thought of being left in that lost country without the means of ever reaching civilization again was a maddening one.

It would no doubt drive a person gifted with weak nerves insane.

Such for a brief moment seemed the fate of our explorers.

But Barney had seen the air ship move just at the right moment and guessed its meaning.

He had not time to reach it.

That was out of the question.

But he felt the electric wire, still attached to the ship, passing his shoulder and breaking the insulators free from the trees. Instinctively he clutched it.

A few seconds later he was a thousand feet in the air and still going higher, clinging to the dangling wire fully fifty feet below the hull of the air ship.

It was a frightful moment not only for Barney but for the spectators beneath. Every man held his breath.

"Great God!" gasped Frank Reade, Jr., a cold sweat breaking out upon him. "This is awful. We are lost."

"Lost!" echoed Washington Whitwell.

What more appalling catastrophe could have occurred than this? Words cannot paint it adequately.

Never before had the air ship been left alone. Somebody always remained aboard. But on this occasion the excitement attendant upon the shooting of the megotherim had caused the disaster.

Barney had not thought but that Pomp was aboard and Pomp ditto. In one sense nobody was to blame for the calamity.

But those on the ground could only stand white-faced and see the air ship going zenithward.

Every moment they expected to see Barney lose his hold and descend to death. What a death!

How high the air ship would go there was no estimating.

It would certainly go up beyond the limit of terrestrial atmosphere, and as long as the rotoscopes would revolve it would keep on.

Truly Frank Reade, Jr., believed he had seen the last of his air ship.

But now a great cry escaped Jim Cable. He had chanced to gaze up the mountain-side, and a thrilling sight met his gaze.

There in the fading light of day, outlined against the sky, stood upon a jutting crag two men of a nationality with which none in our party of adventurers were familiar.

They were powerful in frame, and of an olive hue of skin, dressed in part armor, with breast-plate and casque, much after the fashion of the Roman centurions of scriptural times.

It seemed as if two of these ancient warriors had risen from the dead and stood before our adventurers.

The amazement of all cannot be portrayed in words.

There they stood, statue-like, gazing as if spell-bound at the new invaders of their country. Neither seemed to have the power to make a move.

The air-ship, with Barney's form dangling beneath it, seemed a mere speck in the darkening sky.

By the time that our adventurers had recovered fully from their surprise at sight of the the two armored men, it had disappeared entirely.

"Golly, Marse Frank, who am dey?" gasped Pomp, in mingled dismay and wonderment.

"Keel haul me, but I never seen the likes of them chaps afore!" declared Jim Cable, in stupefaction. "And I've visited many foreign lands in my day."

But Frank Reade, Jr. exchanged significant glances with Washington Whitwell.

"At last we have found the lost race," exclaimed the young inventor. "As I live, Whitwell, they dress exactly as the Jews did in the time of Christ."

"Evidently time has lent them but few improvements," agreed Whitwell. "Over eighteen and a half centuries and no change in the style of dress. Whew! not much like the Americans, eh?"

"Not much!" replied Frank Reade, Jr. with a laugh. "But come, friends, we are isolated here, by fate, and however unkind it may have treated us let us make the best of the situation. The air ship is gone, but we will devise some other way of returning to civilization, at least if my inventive faculties are good for anything."

Pomp threw up his cap and cheered. He had unbounded confidence in Frank Reade, Jr. The spirits of all arose.

The young inventor proposed to make the acquaintance of the two warriors whom they had seen, but upon looking up again they were no longer in sight.

They had mysteriously disappeared. All search of the mountain side failed in discovering further trace of them.

Frank Reade, Jr. was not a little disappointed, as was Washington Whitwell.

But it was now quite dark, and as the cries of wild animals could be heard in the forest, for safety sake as well as other reasons it was decided to build a fire and make a camp for the night.

Dogwood was collected by Pomp and a roaring fire was soon going. Cable was to hold guard the first part of the night—and Barney the latter.

All threw themselves on the ground and completely worn out with the fatigue of the day fell asleep.

Nothing occurred during the night to mar their slumbers and all

were aroused by Pomp just as the dawn of another day was breaking in the east.

Now that the excitement of the past twenty four hours had reached a lull, our adventurers began to experience the natural reaction and the spirits of all began to droop.

Breakfast was eaten in silence, most lugubrious and profound. Indeed, there was good reason for this depression of mind.

Thousands of miles from home, lost in an inaccessible part of the world, what more fearful situation could be imagined.

Only Frank Reade, Jr. and Jim Cable were at all hopeful.

The former felt some reliance upon his inventive faculties for a way out of the difficulty. The latter had been too long accustomed to call any part of the globe home, to long remain homesick or despondent. But Whitwell and Pomp were in decidedly bad spirits.

"Of all the scrapes I ever got into, this in the worst," averred the millionaire traveler, with a wry face.

"True, but there is nothing now to hinder your study of the lost race," said Frank Reade, Jr., with a forced laugh. "I should think your interest in that great discovery would outweigh all else."

"Yes, it would," agreed Whitwell. "But what good can it do the world at large now. Where is the honor to us as explorers or to the world? Buried with us here."

"Oh, well, we must hope for better luck," declared Frank Reade, Jr. "Come, let's waste no more time here but look about us, and see what sort of country we are in."

It was but a few moments work to prepare for the move.

Their effects were precious few, and soon collected. In a few moments they were on the move following the small stream in the direction of its source. For some miles they kept on through a region which presented, kaleidoscope like, new wonders at every step.

But still no sign of human habitation was found. All was the stillness and desolation of the wilderness.

Indeed, Pomp declared that they had reached the end of the earth and would soon step off into space.

"Fo' de Lor', Marse Frank," he said, in virtuous dismay, "I done tink dis chilluns will neber see old Readestown again. Dat am a drefful hard ting to tink of."

"Don't get discouraged, Pomp," said Frank Reade, Jr. "We have been in many a tight fix and didn't I always bring you out all right?"

"Dat am a gospel fact," agreed Pomp. "A'right, Marse Frank, I done tink you'll invent a nodder flying ship. I see mos' suah ob it."

Whitwell had recovered somewhat from his despondency, and was interesting himself deeply in the characteristics of the region through which they were passing.

In this manner they kept on with little incident of note until noon.

Then Frank had called a halt when Jim Cable pointed skyward with a wild, startled cry.

To the eastward of their position was a high mountain peak and over this, fully a thousand feet hovered a balloon. All gazed upon the sight with wonderment.

"The balloon!" gasped Jim Cable.

That this was the same balloon which they had seen from the deck of the air-ship previous to the simoom there was no doubt.

What had saved it from utter destruction in that dreadful storm, they could only surmise.

Yet it was no mirage, but on actual visible reality. Indeed in the car could be described the forms of two persons, one a man and the other a female.

What was more the balloon seemed to be swaying violently and was settling fast. There was quite a large rent visible in its side which was every moment growing larger.

It was likely that the aeronauts would alight on the mountain peak.

Frank Reade Jr., could not help a thrill as he noted this fact. It immediately became his resolve to meet the aeronauts and learn who they were.

Accordingly he gave the word and all started up the mountain side with great speed. As they drew near the summit, the balloon sank lightly to the ground.

They were now near enough to distinguish the features of those in the balloon. One was a tall man with gray whiskers and wearing glasses. The other was a young girl, whom Frank Reade, Jr. thought was of a type of beauty such as he had never seen the like of.

The two aeronauts stood in the car of the balloon, and regarded our adventurers with not a little of wonderment and alarm.

But their fears were quickly set at rest by Frank Reade, Jr., who cried:

"I hope we have met a fellow countryman. If I am not mistaken, you are an American, sir?"

A light of joy seemed to suffuse the man's face, and he replied:

"You have guessed aright, sir. Of course, you are the same?"

"You are right."

"But—"

"What?"

"What are you doing here in this out-of-the-way part of the world?"

"Well," said Frank Reade, Jr., as he grasped hands with the aeronaut, "it would require some time for me to detail the real objects of my visit here. But I will briefly state that it is mainly in search of a lost people."

The aeronaut was astounded.

"Then you are en route to Central Africa?" he asked.

"To the contrary, I have reached the end of my journey."

"Do you expect to find the lost people here?"

"Yes."

"I have no idea in what part of the world we are."

"Well, perhaps I can enlighten you. We are at present in an unexplored part of the world, hemmed in by the greatest wonder of all nature, the Sea of Sand."

"The Sea of Sand!" ejaculated the aeronaut. "As sure as my name is James Pendennis I never heard of such a sea."

Frank briefly detailed the peculiarities of the Sea of Sand. James Pendennis listened like one in a trance.

"Do you mean to say that we are now in a country surrounded by that impassable sea?" he asked.

"I believe so," replied Frank Reade, Jr. "At least I know that to be the case on one side, that next the desert. The southern part of this country may possibly merge into the impenetrable forests of Central Africa."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed James Pendennis in amazement. "I am myself in this part of the world upon a mission of scientific purposes. I am preparing a work upon the climate and natural resources of this part of Africa. But permit me to introduce you to my daughter Myrtle."

All were introduced in turn to the very beautiful young lady and Washington Whitwell felt his hitherto impervious heart give a little leap as he held her hand in his.

"So you expected to travel the region over with better ease in a balloon?" asked Frank Reade, Jr.

"Yes."

"Did it not occur to you as a matter of some risk?"

"Yes, but I did not heed that," replied the aeronaut. "Myrtle and I have traveled many miles in this balloon."

"I fear you will travel no further in it."

"No," said the aeronaut regretfully. "I fear that I shall not. That rent in the side is past repairing."

"I may mention that I am something of a traveler in the air, myself," said Frank, quietly. "Indeed, we came hither in the air."

James Pendennis looked surprised.

"How is that?" he asked. "May I ask your name, sir?"

"Certainly! Frank Reade, Jr., Readestown, U. S. A."

James Pendennis gave a sharp cry.

"Frank Reade, Jr.," he cried. "Why, all the world knows of you, sir, and your wonderful inventions. I am glad to make your acquaintance. But your air-ship—"

"Is lost," replied Frank, dismally.

"Great heavens! What do you mean?"

Frank with this at once detailed the loss of the air-ship, and Barney's probable fate. The aeronaut Pendennis listened attentively.

"Then our lot is all in common," he declared. "We are all castaways in this part of the world. I am glad that we have met you, for it has enabled me to learn just what our position is."

Whitwell and Myrtle Pendennis had been having a quiet chat all this while. Now, however, the aeronaut stepped out of the car to the ground.

The balloon would have sprung into the air again, but all laid hold on it and held it down.

Myrtle was assisted out. The balloon gradually subsided as the gas escaped, and finally lay collapsed upon the ground.

"I brought the balloon with me to Cairo," said James Pendennis.

"From there I made the ascent, and tried to cross the desert. The upper currents of air, however, brought me here."

"Well, we will make the best of the situation," declared Frank Reade, Jr., hopefully. "There is no use in crying over spilt milk."

From their present elevation a good view could be had of the country in every direction.

To the southward as far as the eye could reach, were long strips of forest land, with intervening valleys and plains.

In the other direction, dimly visible, was the broad expanse of the Sea of Sand.

As they were engaged in studying the face of the country attentively, suddenly a long column of smoke was seen ascending above the tops of the trees below.

"Golly! What am dat, Marse Frank?" asked Pomp in an excited manner.

"I should say it was a camp," said Washington Whitwell.

Frank Reade, Jr., studied the smoke for some time, and then it was decided that he and Whitwell and Pomp would descend and investigate.

Cable was to be left with Pendennis and Myrtle.

Thus decided they set out down the mountain side with their Winchester in readiness for use.

But they had not proceeded one hundred yards when a most startling incident occurred.

A wild cry of alarm came from those left behind. Frank Reade, Jr., turned and beheld a fearful thrilling sight.

From behind rocks and ledges there had suddenly sprung into view a score of savage-looking men.

In all his travels the young inventor had never seen such physical giants as these men were. There were of a white skin with long matted hair and scraggly beards. The only articles of clothing worn were a goat skin over the shoulders and a breech clout of the same.

They were armed with shields and long lances tipped with steel. Some carried bows, and others huge battle clubs.

They were rushing savagely upon the three left on the summit. Cable had bravely placed himself in front of Myrtle and met the attack desperately.

The giant savages threw themselves upon Pendennis.

The aeronaut made a brief resistance then went down with a crushed skull.

A wild scream went up on the air, and with horror all saw that Myrtle was separated from Cable and was being carried off in the giant arms of one of the wild men.

This aroused Frank Reade, Jr. His blood seemed on fire. As for Washington Whitwell, whose heart had been captivated by the beautiful young girl, he was beside himself with horror.

Frank threw his rifle to his shoulder.

"Give 'em a volley, boys," he cried.

small clearing on the verge of a forest so dark and thick as to be almost impenetrable.

Here it was deemed necessary to camp. A more discouraged party the sun never went down upon.

All hope was lost.

Though their acquaintance with Myrtle Pendennis was brief all had learned to regard her as a sweet pure girl, and it was a matter by far too horrible to consider that she was in the hands of the wild men.

Whitwell paced up and down groaning in despair.

"It is a fearful shame!" he kept repeating drearily. "Why did we leave them even for a moment? It was a fatal mistake."



The ship went down rapidly, and when within twenty-five feet of the water, Frank Reade, Jr., threw over a rope, and shouted: "Ahoy, my friend! Don't you want to come up?"

Pomp and Whitwell followed his example. As fast as they could work the repeating Winchesters they poured volley after volley into the savage gang.

Terrified beyond all expression the wild men fled.

The next moment Frank Reade, Jr., was feeling the pulse of James Pendennis. But there was no doubt as to the aeronaut's fate. He was dead.

Myrtle was gone. Cable was just regaining his senses from a crack on the skull from one of the battle axes.

White-faced and horror-struck all gazed at each other.

What a horrible fate must await the young girl. But one impulse was paramount in the breasts of all.

This was expressed by Washington Whitwell in a brief but thrilling sentence:

"To the rescue!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### A STRANGE BATTLE.

ALL other thoughts were banished from the minds of our adventurers. Frank Reade, Jr., led the way and they dashed down the mountain side.

But the giant savages had in some manner gained the fastnesses of the deep forest and all trace of them was lost.

Many weary miles were tramped by the rescuing party. But all was without avail and when night came once more they came out in a

Camp was made in the clearing. The first day's experience in this country of the lost people was by no means pleasant to reflect upon. One fact puzzled Frank Reade, Jr., not a little.

He called Whitwell aside and said:

"Did you not perceive that these men were more savage and totally different from those first inhabitants, whom we saw all in armor and equipped in a more civilized fashion?"

"Yes," replied Whitwell. "I believe they are of a different race."

"Then there are at least two different races in this unexplored region?"

"So it would seem."

"I believe we shall find a civilized people then. I have been thinking of our present position, which is by no means an enviable one. Supposing these wild men attack us in a body. We would stand little show, for our ammunition is limited."

"You are right," agreed Whitwell in dismay. "Our position is getting desperate."

Frank Reade, Jr., slept little that night. This proved fortunate, for a little past midnight Pomp, who was on guard, suddenly cried out in great alarm:

"Marse Frank, all wake up, quick. De woods am full ob dem. Dere dey come!"

Pomp sent a bullet into the midst of the horde of wild men, who were swarming out of the black depths of the forest into the moonlight.

It was fortunate for our friends that it was moonlight, else a massacre might have been the result.

As it was Cable and Whitwell seized their rifles and protected one end of the camp, while Frank Reade, Jr., and Pomp defended the other end.

Volley after volley was given the advancing mass of barbarians with the Winchesters.

Terrified by the flash and report and the deadly work of the rifles, which were to them mysterious kind of weapons, the wild men fell back.

Morning came at last.

Carrying their long spears aloft, the troop made a most commanding appearance in their glittering armor.

Our travelers gazed spell-bound at the spectacle. Whether they were seen by the soldiery or not was not made evident, for at that moment a wonderful scene followed.

Suddenly the wild uproar of a thousand human voices was heard, and from a belt of deep forest a vast swarming mass of human beings surged forth.

It required but a glance to see that they were the wild men of the woods, and that a conflict was certain to take place between them and the horsemen.



But the powerful steel netting could not be forced as easily as all this. It resisted the best efforts of the lion, who vainly tried to tear his way through it, while Frank Reade, Jr., fired shot after shot at the monster.

The savage men yet hovered in the forest. The situation was critical beyond all description.

Ammunition was getting scarce, and Frank Reade, Jr., knew that unless an immediate change of base was made their fate would be sealed.

It cost the young inventor no little study and anxious thought to decide upon this. But with the coming of daylight the little party of explorers had crossed a ridge of land near, and now were in a different part of the country.

The scenery began to undergo a change. The mountains gave way to plains and meadows.

The ruins of an ancient stone building were discovered. Here the pursuit of the wild men ceased.

Evidences of civilization became more apparent. The ground seemed to have been tilled in this locality, and suddenly they came upon a paved road.

Mass and weeds covered the pavements, but our adventurers kept on. Suddenly a startling sight brought all to a halt.

Down a slope not half a mile distant a body of horsemen galloped.

They were different, vastly so, from the unclad savages with whom they had just been fighting.

The horses they bestrode were powerful animals, with the well fed appearance of blooded stock. The riders were attired in coats of mail and helmets similar to that worn by the Roman soldiery in the time of Herod.

All drew a deep breath and watched the conflict with deepest interest.

Straight into the midst of the wild men rode the cavalcade.

The two forces met with a tremendous crash, and the scene which followed baffles description.

The air was filled with flying weapons, and the loud yells and shouts of the struggling mass were deafening.

Blows were given right and left, the horsemen urged their steeds forward madly, and otherwise displayed great valor.

But the wild men on foot outnumbered them five to one and seemed to hold the advantage.

They swarmed about the mounted troop like bees, struck them from their horses, beat them down with their powerful clubs, and in less than fifteen minutes had won a conclusive victory.

Such of the armored troop as were left broke ranks and fled.

It was a fearful hand to hand battle, and our adventurers gazed upon it with emotions far beyond expression.

But they were now in a position of the greatest peril themselves. Frank Reade, Jr., saw this, and was not slow to act.

"Come!" he cried, "for your lives, every man! Let us get out of here."

Fortunately they were near the summit of the ridge. It was an easy matter to plunge into the belt of timber which fringed this, and they were soon safe beyond pursuit.

Coming out of the woods they found themselves now in a small valley between rolling hills.

Suddenly, as Frank Reade, Jr., was passing a thicket, he heard a deep groan. It was but an instant's work to investigate, and there beneath the branches he descried the form of a man.

It was one of the troop, and he was suffering from a broken arm and a blow upon the head. He regarded our adventurers with surprise, and even terror, until Frank Reade, Jr., by signs calmed his fears.

Then the young inventor addressed him in French, German and other tongues, without, however, getting a response.

"Look here, Whitwell," he cried, turning to the great traveler, "Didn't you tell me that you were quite familiar with the Hebrew tongue?"

"I did," replied Whitwell.

"Perhaps the fellow would understand that."

"I will try him."

Accordingly Whitwell addressed the warrior in the Hebrew tongue. To the surprise and joy of all, he made answer.

Whitwell exchanged several remarks with this representative of a lost tribe of the Israelitish race. Then he turned to Frank, saying in English:

"That old manuscript was right. We are in a wonderful country, governed by King Lodom, a lineal descendent of David. This man is an out and out Hebrew, and he, with his people, still cling to the manners and customs as well as the old faith of Abraham and Isaac."

"Wonderful!" gasped Frank Reade, Jr. "That seems beyond belief."

"Yet why should it not be reasonable to suppose that this branch of Israel, disconnected from the outer world, and shut up in limited territory would, through all these ages, still preserve their old time habits and dress? They have had no necessary intercourse with foreigners to enable them to adopt any change."

"You are right," agreed Frank; "but it is a most wonderful discovery."

"Of course it is, and quite invaluable to science. How the religious and scientific world will be electrified when they learn of this wonderful bit of exploration."

Frank was quite overcome with the thought. But Whitwell was now engaged in conversation again with Abopaul, which was the Hebrew's name, while Pomp with skilled hands was engaged in dressing his wounds.

For the better enlightenment of the reader we will give literally the conversation between Abopaul and Whitwell.

"But who are these wild men with whom you have been fighting?" asked Whitwell, briefly.

"They are the only other inhabitants this side of the Sea of Sand," replied Abopaul. "They are called the Barokites, and they are very wild and courageous men."

"They delight in warfare?"

"Yes."

"What is the name of your people?"

"We are called Malokites."

"And your city of Menotopal, of which you have told me, how far distant may that be from here?"

"Not fifty leagues."

"Ah, how large a nation may yours be?"

"About two hundred thousand souls in all," replied Abopaul.

"Ah, do the Barokites outnumber you?"

"Oh, yes, they number half a million."

"Then you must fear them."

"Not in a pitched battle. We have a superior knowledge of warfare and arms. But the Barokites are better fighters in the bush."

"Indeed! Were you seeking a conflict with them?"

"No, we were engaged in looking up the boundary line of King Lodom's sheep plains. But we expected to meet wild men."

"Then you are constantly at war with them?"

"Yes."

Whitwell pursued his catechism for a long time, and learned that the city of Menotopal was walled and built of stone after the manner of Jerusalem.

Also that all of the manners, religious customs and other features were almost identical with that of the ancient Jews.

Here was a most wonderful discovery. One of the lost tribes of Israel so often mentioned in Holy Writ was found.

Our explorers had good reason to be proud of their achievement. Also the spirits of all revived, as it was now settled for a fact that they would become friends with the Malokites. Life might not become such a dreary thing after all in this lost region.

Upon his part, Abopaul now catechised Whitwell, asking him many questions concerning the world beyond the Sea of Sand.

The millionaire traveler took keen delight in detailing to the Hebrew the wonders of the intervening centuries, the story of the fall of Jerusalem and the dissemination of Christianity over the whole world.

Also he told him of America, of the wonders of these modern times, the inventions of steam, electricity and so forth.

Abopaul listened like one in a dream. He pinched himself to make sure that he was awake, and when Whitwell told him of their method of crossing the Sea of Sand in the air-ship, the poor Hebrew's mind was completely overstrained.

"Am I mad?" he gasped, wiping the cold perspiration from his brow. "These wonders are beyond me. But you shall tell them before the King of Menotopal!"

"I shall be glad to do that," cried Whitwell eagerly. "As soon as you are able we will gladly accompany you to your city."

"I am able to go now," cried Abopaul, springing to his feet. "My head is better, and now that you have kindly cared for my broken arm I am able to go."

"Then let us start at once."

Whitwell turned to Frank Reade, Jr., and the others, and translated into English the words of Abopaul.

"Let us go to this wonderful city of Menotopal at once," declared the young inventor. "I am ready."

But the words had barely left his lips when a startling thing occurred.

Suddenly a chorus of hoarse cries rose upon the air and a dozen long javelins came hurtling through the air.

Luckily none were struck and Frank Reade, Jr., sprang behind a tree, crying:

"To cover all. Give them a quick volley."

His commands were obeyed.

A rattling volley from the Winchesters drove the attacking Barokites back to the woods again.

Abopaul at the first discharge fell upon his face overcome with dismay. But Whitwell lifted him up and attempted to explain to him the mechanism of his Winchester.

Abopaul listened in an awe-struck manner, but of course being ignorant of the properties of gunpowder it was all a blank mystery to his untutored mind.

The Barokites were driven back to the forest and our adventurers with Abopaul made for a narrow pass which was an outlet to the valley beyond.

Abopaul explained that it was from there a straight road to the city of Menotopal.

Down the valley they retreated keeping the foe back with a steady fire.

Now the pass was reached, but just as they were about to enter it a most dismaying thing occurred.

Suddenly the further end of the pass became alive with half naked forms. The wild men had made a bold *coup de main* in that direction and retreat was cut off.

There seemed no way but to cut their way through. A more desperate situation could hardly be imagined.

"My God!" groaned Frank Reade, Jr. "We are surely lost."

"This is the worst yet," declared Whitwell with a thrill of horror.

"Golly, Marse Frank, I done tink our time am come," sputtered Pomp. "Dere's one ob de naked debbils an' I'll jes' gib him one fo' luck."

Bang!

Pomp's rifle brought one of the Barokites to the ground.

A mad yell went up from the wild men, and they pressed forward recklessly.

Frank noted one evident fact with a thrill of dismay and hopelessness. They had seemed to have lost their fear for the rifles.

As they outnumbered the exploring party at least fifty to one, the real desperation of their situation can readily be imagined.

Frank Reade, Jr., saw that they were sure to give battle to the savage horde. He could foresee the sequel as that of death.

But though his face blanched his brave young heart did not quail.

He was determined if it was sure death to make a stand, to at least die with his face to the foe.

Not one of the others flinched, and Jim Cable placed himself beside Frank Reade, Jr., saying:

"Dash me, but I reckon we've nigh run aground this r'y'age, Mr. Reade. We'll give the blasted land sharks a good broadside anyway, afore we strike our colors."

"That we will," cried Frank, drawing a bead on a burly savage.

"Give it to them, boys. Don't wait a minute."

Crash! went the rifles in a blinding volley. As fast as the repeaters could be worked our adventurers let the foe have the leaden storm full in their faces.

The Barokites were mowed down like weeds. Yet they kept on in their mad reckless charge.

Frank had espied a commanding position on an eminence near.

They retreated to this and fought behind a sort of natural breastworks. Again and again the Barokites were driven back with fearful slaughter.

"See," suddenly cried Whitwell, "they are trying to outflank us."

"We will see about that," muttered the young inventor as he slipped some more cartridges into the chamber of the repeater.

A volley soon scattered the flanking party, and the wild men, appalled at their repeated repulses, retreated to a safe distance and held a conference.

"I hope they will have sense enough now to retire," muttered Frank Reade, Jr. "I am afraid that we cannot much longer withstand such attacks."

"Dat am a fac', Massa Frank," cried Pomp in dismay. "Fo' bress yo' soul all ob our cartridges are nigh gib out."

An investigation revealed this as an appalling fact. Words cannot adequately depict the horror of our explorers.

Their fate seemed sealed.

Barely enough cartridges were left for another volley. Indeed at this moment the Barokites were seen advancing to another attack.

A hand to hand conflict would be fatal. What was to be done?

Retreat was quite impossible. They were hemmed in on all sides.

Now the Barokites came on with wild yells.

When a hundred feet distant a volley was fired into their midst. They fell back, but it was only for a moment.

Frank Reade, Jr., sprang up and clutched his rifle like a club, swinging it over his head and crying:

"Now, boys, let us sell our lives as dearly as possible."

A desperate cheer broke from the lips of the explorers. On came the foe in a sweeping mass. The little band opposed to them were as nothing in their path.

They would have been swept away like chaff. That hour would have been their last.

But as if with the wrath of an Omnipotent Jove a bolt descended from the sky and exploded in the midst of the Barokites.

A fearful slaughter and panic was the result. The ranks were hurled asunder and heaps of slain men upon every hand.

The wild men broke and fled.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE MALAKITE CITY.

FRANK READE, JR., instinctively gazed upward, and a mighty cry from the depths of his heart welled upward.

What a glorious sight it was which he beheld.

Above them and rapidly descending was the air-ship.

Over the rail they saw Barney leaning with a grin upon his Hibernian mug and brandishing another electric bomb.

He threw it once more amongst the terrified Barokites and this was quite enough to disperse them.

Words cannot adequately describe the scene which followed.

Pomp danced and leaped in the air like a madman. Jim Cable swung his hat with a regular main-deck cheer. Whitwell clapped his hands, and Abopaul would have incontinently fled but for Frank Reade, Jr., who held him back.

The air-ship settled slowly down, and Barney stood at the rail cheering wildly.

"Be the sowl of me mither-in-law," he cried, with great gusto, "I've found ye at lasht. Shure, I was afeard O'id niver see ye agin, Mither Frank—and—save us, if there ain't the naygur yet!"

But Pomp was too keenly delighted to mind Barney's keen shots. Barney would not leave the air-ship, and all came tumbling aboard.

"My soul, Barney," said Frank Reade, Jr., in a voice choking with emotion, "I can but consider this a miracle. I believed you dead. How did you ever get aboard of the air-ship?"

"Be me sowl, I hardly know meself," replied Barney. "It war a grate surprise to me. I was nigh dead with hanging to that woire, whin I began to wind it around me arm. It tuk me a long while, sorr, but foinally I got aboard of the ship onct more. Thin it was the devil's own job to foind me way back to this blashted country. But it's home we'll go now, Mither Frank?"

"Oh, no," said Frank, "we have a great mission to perform in this country."

"Shure, sorr, what may that be?"

"There is a young girl, Myrtle Pendennis by name, who has fallen in the power of the wild men. We must first rescue her."

"Whist! aisy, me hearty!" cried Barney, with twinkling eyes. "It's a surprise party I have for ye."

With this the rollicking Irishman slid back the cabin door. A female form stepped forth upon the deck. It was Myrtle Pendennis, pale and beautiful, but unharmed.

Words cannot describe the amazement of all.

"Myrtle Pendennis!" gasped Frank Reade, Jr. "But how did you rescue her, Barney?"

"Shure an' it wuz aisy enuff," declared the son of Erin. "Sit down here be the rail an' I'll tell ye all about it."

Barney then told his story.

It seemed that he had remained long suspended in the air from the wire attached to the air-ship before he bethought himself of a means of getting aboard.

To attempt to scale the wire was beyond his strength.

But he hit luckily upon the idea of gradually winding the wire about his body and arm. In this manner he gradually worked his way up to the keel of the ship and secured a hold of the anchor rope.

He was now in air so rarified that blood almost burst from his nostrils.

He managed to disentangle the wire from his body, then easily went aboard the air-ship.

He was just able to reach the dynamos and shut off the current when he sank down overcome with exhaustion.

The air-ship descended until it struck the ground gently.

Then Barney recovered.

But it was pitchy dark, and the air-ship rested in the midst of the desert, so that nothing could be done that night.

But with the morning light Barney took flight once more and set a course as near as he could reckon for the lost country.

He crossed the Sea of Sand once more and passed over a wide clearing in the forest, in the midst of which he recognized a strange and thrilling sight.

A heap of logs was in the clearing, and bound to them was the form of a young girl.

Two of the heathens were about to apply a torch to the funeral pyre upon which was their human sacrifice.

Barney was resolved to save the life of the young girl.

So he took a couple of electric bombs and threw them into the midst of the throng.

They scattered with wild confusion.

It was easy then to descend and rescue the girl, who proved to be Myrtle Pendennis.

All that day Barney kept up the search for the explorers, and, as we have seen, came upon them at a most opportune moment.

But for his sudden appearance, their lives would have been sacrificed.

It is needless to say that Frank Reade, Jr., was delighted to get back upon the deck of his air-ship.

Myrtle Pendennis was in an agony of grief over her dear father's death, but was grateful to her deliverers from her captivity in the hands of the Barokites.

But for Barney's prompt work she would no doubt have lost her life.

The air-ship was not in the least injured, as Frank Reade, Jr., learned after going over it carefully in inspection.

It was a joyful transition for our adventurers from the virtual Slough of Despond to the Valley of Joy aboard the air-ship. The future once more looked bright, and they were as people brought back from the dead.

It was decided to continue their research in the lost continent just as if nothing had happened.

But it required much coaxing to induce the Hebrew Abopaul to go aboard the air-ship.

"Bogorra, av it's a city yez are lukin' for," cried Barney, "I think I could see that same afore I descended here on this spot. Jist take a lift into the air, Mither Frank, an' about half a mile up yez can luk over thim mountains and see it as loike as loife."

"Is that so?" cried Whitwell, eagerly. "Then all we have got to do, Frank, is to sight the city and make a straight course for it."

"Right," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "Start the rotoscopes, Barney."

The Hibernian needed no second bidding. He sprang to the pilot-house and soon the air-ship was rising rapidly.

Poor Abopaul, the Hebrew, was terrified for a time and crouched with chattering teeth upon the air-ship's deck.

He did not dare to look downward for a long while, and when he finally mustered up sufficient courage to do so, he was thrown into a paroxysm of terror.

Washington Whitwell with great difficulty succeeded in calming him. The air-ship held a straight course for the city of Menotopal, whose domes and minarets could be seen glittering white and beautiful in the distance.

The country now began to undergo a wonderful change.

Cultivated fields were seen, and a legion of sheep and other domestic animals. But everywhere the inhabitants, men, women and children, fled before the approach of the air ship.

Only one thing made any sort of a stand. This was a body of soldiers who were encountered not four miles from the walls of the city.

These stood their ground, and sent arrows hurtling up after the air ship.

This could do no personal harm to any on board, and the air ship passed over them safely.

The city was now rapidly neared. Abopaul leaned over the rail, and in wildest excitement tried to attract the attention of the terrified people whom they met.

"Where shall we descend?" asked Frank as he stood with Washington Whitwell in the bow of the air-ship.

"Do you see that tall house with the wide roof?" said Whitwell.

"I shall let the air ship rest there."

Now that they were over the city it could be seen that a scene of the wildest confusion was below.

An immense uproar was heard, and soldiers, citizens, men, women, and children could be seen running hither and thither excitedly.

The air ship settled slowly down and rested upon the roof of the building selected. A beautiful view of Menotopal could be had.

It was seen to be a city of about half the size of Boston, beautifully situated in a picturesque valley with hills of wonderful grandeur about.

A wall of thick white stone like a species of marble completely surrounded the city.

The buildings were all of a flat roof kind and flowering gardens were upon these roofs.

There the wildest of exotic plants thrived and even small lemon and orange trees blossomed with rare fragrance.

It was like a view of Eden to our explorers, and Frank Reade, Jr., was so deeply impressed that he exclaimed:

"This is the most beautiful city that I have ever seen. Nothing in the Orient surpasses it."

"You are right," agreed Washington Whitwell. "In some respects it resembles Damascus, only it is far more beautiful."

It was a strange sight to see these Hebrews, remnant of the ancient tribe of Israel, dressed exactly as their old-time progenitors. It seemed like a transition from the present back into the decades of the past.

Now that the air ship rested upon the roof, Abopaul hastened to scramble over the rail.

He seemed relieved to get off from the air ship's deck.

The roof had evidently been hastily vacated. A mantel of rich stuff was thrown over the back of an antiques-carved chair. A mosaic table was overturned, and a bottle of red wine was smashed upon the rich tile paving of the roof.

Abopaul addressed Whitwell in the Hebrew tongue:

"The great conqueror of the air has frightened my people. But I will tell them that they have nothing to fear. I will tell them that you

are of a mighty nation, come, not to make war with the Malakite, but to make peace."

"That is right," replied Whitwell. "Also tell them that we are allied with them against the Barokites."

"Abopaul will spread the news," cried the wounded Hebrew soldier. "It will reach King Lodom, and he will come and treat with the King of the Air. Salaam, master! I will return."

With this Abopaul left the roof.

Our explorers awaited the result of this. Below in the streets an immense uproar could be heard. The Malakites were there in force, and might have tried to do harm to the air-ship, but Abopaul appeared.

He rendered a stirring address, which was listened to with deepest reverence and wonderment.

It had a magical effect upon the people. From that moment Frank Reade, Jr., counted the Malakites as his warmest friends.

The address of Abopaul was in favor of treating with the King of the Air, as Frank was called.

Couriers at once arrived from the royal palace, and arrangements were made for a visit to the air-ship by his majesty.

A cordon of soldiers formed about one of the public squares, and thus assured protection, Frank Reade, Jr., brought the air-ship down to a rest upon the level ground, where all the people could plainly see it.

To guard against any undue invasion, however, Frank caused the steel netting to be put up, and behind this our adventurers could take in the scene about them with safety.

But the good intentions of the Malakites soon became apparent.

Frank needed not to impress upon Abopaul the fact that he could with his deadly engines of electricity destroy them and their city.

The Malakites were a wonderfully beautiful race of people, symmetrical in form and intelligent to the highest degree.

But it was a curious sight indeed to gaze upon the passing throng, with their turbaned men and loosely gowned women, the Oriental magnificence of rich drapery and dress. It seemed like being carried back into the old Jerusalem of which we are told by Holy Writ.

Whitwell was not idle a moment.

With note-book and sketching-pencil he was busy jotting down characteristics and criticisms, and making artistic drawings with which to embellish the pages of the book which he proposed to write upon the subject when he should return home once more.

The maidens of the Malakite people were beautiful in form and feature. The young men were wonderful specimens of manly physique.

It was evident that they were a wealthy nation.

Few poverty-stricken people were seen and no beggars. Frank Reade, Jr., learned that there was a royal edict against them.

The traditional ass, mentioned so often in Holy Writ, was there as a beast of burden.

Also the camel and the elephant. The scene was one of constantly changing sort, and consequently of great interest.

Now came a troop of shepherds, with their sheepskin girdles and curly beards. They regarded the air-ship wonderingly, and played many fantastic airs upon their flutes to the explorers.

Presently a prince and his train came along. Men and women richly attired, and each bearing some article of vertu were in the train. Ethiopian slaves held the vast fans which agitated the air about the dignitary's head.

And right here was a point which caused Whitwell and Frank Reade, Jr., a great start of surprise.

They exchanged glances.

"If these people are completely surrounded by the sea of sand, how do these natives of Central Africa get here?" asked Frank.

"There must be communication with the savage tribes in the south," declared Whitwell. "But I will make inquiry."

It was an easy matter to inquire of one of the guards near in the Hebrew tongue.

The fellow replied readily:

"The blacks come from a far country in the south, sir. Our people never go there, for the forests are deep and black, and the people are savage dwarfs, strong and well armed."

The great mystery was solved.

The southern part of this lost region was not hemmed in by the Sea of Sand after all, though the barrier was one scarcely less insurmountable.

"I have it," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "These black dwarfs of darkest Africa are the ones discovered and mentioned by Stanley, who has, no doubt, penetrated very nearly to the boundary of this isolated Hebrew land."

"That is undoubtedly the truth," agreed Whitwell. "Ah, we are making famous progress in our work of research."

"What an incalculable benefit this will be to bibliographers and historians," cried Frank. "They can come here and study the Hebrew life just as it was in the time of Christ."

"We must at once establish communication with the outside world," declared Whitwell enthusiastically.

"You are right."

But at this juncture the blare of trumpets announced the coming of a great procession.

First came a guard of centurians, dressed in glittering armor and bestriding lithe-limbed horses of the Arabian pattern.

Next a file of Jewish soldiers, and then, riding upon asses, the high priests from the temple, bearing their censers and symbols of office.

A troop of maidens came next, diffusing incense upon the balmy air, and behind them was the litter of the king.

The palanquin, for such we might call it, was carried by a dozen armored nobles, and was brought to a halt near the air-ship.

Then costly shawls were cast upon the ground, a guard of honor patrolled on either side and the king descended with stately tread from his carriage and was escorted to the door in the netting which covered the air-ship by two of his high priests.

Frank Reade, Jr., stood there dressed in his finest, while Whitwell stood by his side.

Barney and Pomp and Cable were drawn up in a line on the other side of the door.

Thus was King Lodom of the Malakites received aboard the wonderful American air-ship.

The king was a fierce-looking old patriarch with flowing white beard and hair.

A crown of gold set with diamonds set upon his brow, and his robes were of costly silks and damask.

Abopaul, who was the interpreter, walked proudly by the king's side.

He had been at once ordained royal interpreter and henceforth would become one of the dignitaries of the realm.

It was quite a feather in his cap, and he could easily be excused for feeling somewhat elated in consequence.

Frank bowed politely to King Lodom and a ceremonious introduction was made by Abopaul as interpreter.

The king gazed about him with not a little of wonderment.

He made but few remarks, dealing mostly in monosyllables. Frank showed him all the appointments of the ship, and as well as he was able through the interpreter, Abopaul explained them.

"But this element of which you speak, that you say drives the ship?" asked the king. "Where do you get that?"

"It is electricity," replied Frank.

"What is that?"

"An invisible element which exists in the air, and which can only be generated and bridled by means of chemical action."

The king, of course, never having studied physics or chemistry, was mystified.

No amount of explanation could make him understand the mechanism of the wonderful air-ship.

Frank had determined to give him a genuine surprise.

So he suddenly motioned to Barney and Pomp.

Suddenly the door to the netting was closed the rotascopes began to revolve and the air-ship left the ground.

The king and his two attendants saw the earth below leaving them and a cry of terror escaped their lips.

The king sprang to the rail and tried to burst through the netting. His attendants drew their swords.

Abopaul sprang forward and excitedly exhorted them to be quiet, assuring them earnestly that no harm should be done to them.

This calmed their fears to an extent, but King Lodan who feared that it was all a subterfuge to abduct him, was ill at ease.

But Frank and Whitwell, with kindly efforts, managed to subdue his fears somewhat.

They drew him to the rail of the air-ship and pointed out to him the beauties of the scene far below.

Though the Hebrew monarch shook with fear, he watched it wonderingly. After going up about a mile Frank ordered Barney to descend again.

The air-ship settled rapidly, and King Lodom, fearing a concussion, clung to the rail in terror.

But the air-ship settled down in its former place with such ease that its contact with the earth was hardly felt.

Wild cries and shouts filled the air from the excited people.

They had been trying to burst through the line of soldiers.

The report had spread that it was all a treacherous plot to do away with their king, but now that the wire door opened and King Lodom, pale but excited, appeared unhurt, a revulsion of feeling set in.

The people cheered madly.

King Lodom, now that he was assured of the good faith of those who owned the air-ship, was in the best of spirits.

He declared that his trip in the air was worth a kingdom to him, and that if Frank Reade, Jr., would abide with them and teach his people the secrets of the air-ship, he would make him the highest noble in the realm.

Of course our young inventor declined this honor.

## CHAPTER XI.

### BARNEY AND POMP HAVE A SPREE.

THE king returned to his palanquin, and prepared to return to the palace.

A great number of the high priests and nobles of the Hebrew nation now came forward and were allowed to inspect the air-ship.

Promise was given that the guard of soldiers should be kept there to protect the air-ship from invasion by the rabble, and then the royal pageant took its leave.

But not until a formal invitation had been left for all on board to dine with the king on the following day.

The invitation was accepted; for Whitwell was desirous of studying up the characteristics of these people as much as possible.

A regular fete was given.

Barney and Pomp did not participate, remaining aboard the air-ship, as did Myrtle Pendennis.

The young girl's heart was far too sad over her father's loss to participate in anything like a festival.

So Jim Cable alone accompanied Frank Reade, Jr., and Whitwell. The feast was indeed a royal affair.

Our explorers were hailed and treated as princes and the richest of viands were placed before them.

It was all a scene of Oriental splendor. But, as in the time of the old Jerusalem, they reclined at table, quite a novelty for our Democratic Americans.

"Blow me!" muttered Jim Cable as they were being escorted back to the air-ship after the feast. "If I'd got outside of another jug of that wine I'm mighty afraid I'd have got off my course a bit. It was the best I've tasted in my life."

The royal palace was a mighty edifice of marble, with pillars of porphyry and a kind of camelian stone.

The table was bedecked with the richest of gold and silver tankards, and flagons any one of which was worth a small fortune.

"By Jove!" gasped Washington Whitwell, as they once more stood on the air-ship's deck. "These Hebrews know how to do you honor, don't they? I don't know but we would do better to sojourn among them always."

"The novelty would soon wear off," declared Frank Reade, Jr. "We would soon become but ordinary mortals, and then the king's favor would cease. Let us enjoy ourselves while we can."

But Barney and Pomp, left at home, had been having quite a little celebration in their own way.

It happened that Frank Reade, Jr., had left orders for them to swab the deck of the air-ship while he was gone.

Barney fetched the water and oil while Pomp manipulated the mop.

A heavy cask had to be removed to another part of the ship, and Barney called to Pomp to help him lift it.

"Begorra, it's full toime ye did a bit of worruk yesilf, ye ape-faced naygur," spluttered the Hibernian. "Take howld here now loike a man."

"Ki yi! yo' jes' better speak a little mo' respectful to dis yer chile," retorted Pomp. "I'll bottle yo' up in dat yer cask if yo' says mo' ob dat sort to me."

"Ye will, eh!" roared Barney. "It's no black-faced ape loike ye as wull tell me the loikes of that. Whurroo! Take that, ye blather-skite!"

Barney gave Pomp suddenly the toe of his brogan at the extremity of his spine. The colored gentleman turned an undignified somersault and landed in a pail of sloppy water head first.

The bucket upset, and Pomp's head became entangled in the handle of the pail which was jammed down upon his crown.

It was too funny for anything, and Barney roared with laughter. He seized a long strap and began lustily to baste Pomp across his unprotected rear.

The black roared with pain, and made an ineffectual dive at Barney.

Just then he ran against a rotascope shaft, and the collision wrecked the pail, which fell in pieces over his shoulders.

Barney saw the move just in time, and retreated into the pilot-house and locked the door.

Pomp was obliged for the time being to content himself with shaking his fist at and blackguarding his tormentor through the glass.

But Pomp's fertile brain was not to be defeated in a game of retaliation.

One fact had given him a cue.

He had by chance caught Barney's breath once, and the fragrant odor assured him beyond all doubt that the Hibernian had found somewhere an inexhaustible deposit of the "good old stuff."

Pomp at once determined to find this so-called deposit of whisky.

Not that he cared for appropriating it to his own use. Oh, no, Pomp never drank anything stronger than water, or hardly ever.

So while Barney was in the pilot-house the darky went from one end of the air-ship to the other searching for the secret still, which Barney alone had the key to.

Almost a marvelous instinct aided Pomp in finding it.

In a part of the air-ship under the dynamos where nobody would ever think of looking for it, Pomp found a black jug.

Moreover the jug presented the appearance of having been used frequently, and was now fully two-thirds filled.

Pomp removed the cork and applied his nose. It was the aroma of excellent whisky which greeted his nostrils.

Without hesitation Pomp applied the neck of the jug to his lips and took a deep draught.

Smacking his lips, he set the jug down and began to think.

He very speedily hit upon an idea.

"I'll fix dat 'Pish loafah," he muttered. "He'll nebber want to play no mo' jokes on dis chile again for a suttin fac'. Dar am a sleepin' powder in my chest. I done tote dat down here an' put it in de jug. I des wonder how much whisky am in dar."

Of course he had to take up the jug and shake it to find out.

He was evidently satisfied that there was enough in the jug, for he applied the mouth of it once more to his lips.

Another good draught.

"Dat am good fo' a suttin fac'," he muttered with satisfaction.

Then up he went to his own quarters after the sleeping powders. Down he came, and as he took up the jug once more an appalling fact struck him.

"Dat am a powerful shame to spoil all dat good whisky," he muttered. "Des a little would put him asleep."

But what was to be done with it? He had no other jug or bottle at hand.

Pomp could think of no better receptacle than nature's own, viz., his own stomach.

"It am dead suah to be safe dar," he muttered. "I'll jes' stow away what I can of it fo' safe keepin'."

Had any one at that moment have accused Pomp of a desire to get intoxicated he would have resented it indignantly.

His sole and honest purpose was to put that whisky where it could do Barney no further harm, or good either for that matter.

Accordingly he drank immoderately of it, and then chuckling dropped the sleeping powder into the residue.

He had hardly done this when he heard footsteps coming down the cabin stairs.

It was Barney.

Pomp had just time to slip behind a partition. Barney came straight for the hiding-place of the jug.

Pomp held his breath and with difficulty refrained from laughter. Barney drank liberally from the jug and went up on deck again.

A few minutes later Pomp crept up.

He was beginning to feel queer sensations. His legs seemed to refuse to balance him, and his brain was strangely muddled.

"Golly! dat am de bes' joke on dat 'Pishman yet," he muttered, with an immoderate laugh. "Reckon he won't trouble dis chile again. He-he-he! hi-hi-hi! Des tink I'll go up an' see if he am feelin' it."

Pomp was able to crawl upon deck.

He staggered to the door of the pilot house. There upon the floor lay Barney in a state of insensibility.

Pomp laughed until his sides shook.

Then his legs gave out under him.

"Fo' de Lor', I b'leeve I'm drunk!" he muttered in maudlin dismay. "What'll Marse Frank say?"

But Pomp had imbibed so much of the liquor that it threw him into a maudlin stupor.

He sank down upon the floor of the pilot-house and began to maul Barney in an intoxicated fashion.

Presently the fumes of the liquor were too much, however, and he sank into a deep sleep.

And there they were found by Frank Reade, Jr., and the others returning from the festival.

"Well, this is a pretty state of affairs," exclaimed the young inventor, with disgust. "Dead drunk both of them. All right. I'll teach them a good lesson for this."

Frank shut and locked the pilot house door and went into the cabin. A good lesson was in store for the erring pair.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DIAMOND MINE.

In the hold of the air-ship was exceedingly dark. With Cable's help Frank Reade, Jr., had the two insensible fellows taken thither and left in the darkness, the hatchway being tightly closed. There was only a small grating to admit air.

Here they were left to repent at leisure their erring ways.

While Whitwell and Frank were enjoying a retrospective talk in the cabin, Barney and Pomp slept for hours in their dark quarters.

Barney was the first to arouse, and of course was at once himself, for the drug had spent its force.

Pomp, however, was likely to remain in a maudlin intoxicated condition for some hours yet.

With his return to consciousness, Barney was completely mystified as to where he was and what had happened.

He arose to his feet only to stumble over Pomp.

"Tare an' hounds!" he yelled, "what the devil is all this? Where am I, anyway? Bejabers, have I died an' gone to Purgatory?"

He tried to pick himself up, but his head was buzzing with the effects of the drug and all about him was such intense darkness.

"Phat's all this?" he yelled, kicking Pomp in the abdomen by mistake, for he could not see him. "Plwere am I? Help! murder! it's abducted I am shure."

The sudden shock of Barney's brogan in his stomach brought Pomp out of his sleep with a gasp.

"Kiyi! hol' on dar! Don' kill dis chile. Good Lor'! gib me—hic—a chance to lib."

"Mither of Moses!" gasped Barney, in sheer horror. "If I ain't in Purgatory with the naygur. Saint Pether forbid."

Pomp here tried to gain his feet but stumbled over a cross brace and fell on his head.

Had it been Barney's head the skull would have been certainly smashed. But Pomp had the traditional negro head.

He essayed to rise again but this time butted Barney in the stomach.

The good-natured Hibernian felt that this was the limit of human endurance.

It seemed to him a disgrace to be found in Purgatory with a negro. More than all the rest, to be attacked by him in this manner was an outrage which he felt it his duty to forcibly disclaim.

Accordingly, he let out a yell which would have been a credit to the arch fiend of Hades.

"Whisht away wid ye, ye black skinned son av a say cook!" he yelled, wildly. "I'll bate the brains out av ye! Whurroo! Barney O'Shea will never go thure Pargatory wid sich a dhirty spalpeen as ye."

Barney let out wildly with his fist.

The result was that Pomp went sailing into another part of the hold with a blow under the ear, which brought a howl of pain from him.

Then Barney fell upon his knees and began to pray and call upon his patron saint to release him from his dark position.

"Divil a bit do I know phwere Oi am," he plead. "But Saint Pether, plaze to let me out, and Oi'll niver dhrink another dhrup av whisky as long as I live!"

Saint Peter did not appear, but Barney's prayer was answered, for the trap-door above suddenly opened, and a flood of light was let into the place, and a stern voice said:

"Barney O'Shea, you have disgraced yourself enough. Come up and attend to your duties."

With a decidedly sheepish air, Barney crawled out of the hold. Nobody was in sight, and he made his way to his own stateroom, where he made himself presentable once more, and then went into the pilot-house and pretended to be very busy about the dynamos.

Pomp came up a little later much sobered off.

Neither ventured to get in the way of Frank Reade, Jr., and both were under a little cloud of disgrace for a day or two.

The air ship remained in Menotopal nearly a week.

Then the king desired Frank Reade, Jr., to visit his gold and diamond mines in the mountains. Of course, the young inventor was much pleased to go.

The day was set and the king had consented to go in the air ship.

With his suite accordingly he went on board and the start was made. Rising high above the city the course was indicated to Frank Reade, Jr., and the air ship headed in that direction.

It was a sail of a few hours through the air.

Then the air ship alighted upon the summit of a high mountain. The spot where they alighted was seemingly upon the verge of a mighty crater.

Below were several hundred men half naked working in the various shafts which extended into the depths of the mountain.

"These mines belong to the Government," the king said to Whitwell. "We get some very fine stones from them."

"Indeed!" replied Whitwell in the Hebrew tongue. "It did not occur to me that this was the right sort of soil."

"Come with me."

Frank Reade, Jr. and Whitwell left the air-ship in company with the Hebrew monarch and descended into the diamond mine.

The king picked up a handful of the alluvial soil and said:

"Do you see?"

The soil was of a bluish hue and seemingly rich in glittering particles. The depth of this blue deposit was enormous, extending downward hundreds of feet.

The shafts down which the men climbed were made of heavy beams. They were required to be very strong, for the weight of the loose earth pressing against them was enormous.

At a word from the king a bucket was raised from the depths. It was large and capable of holding three men easily.

The Hebrew monarch motioned the others to enter the bucket and he followed them. In this manner they were lowered into the black depths.

Down they went among the giant timbers for a thousand feet or more.

Then the bottom of the mine was reached. All the workmen showed the visitors great deference. Bowing before the king in a most servile manner.

Many passages extended into the mountain side, and King Lodom talking enthusiastically to Whitwell led the way.

They had penetrated to an inner chamber lit by oil lamps. It chanced that none of the workmen were in the place.

King Lodom was illustrating to his companions the manner of searching for the diamonds, when suddenly there was a strange rumbling roar and a rush of air.

"What was that?" cried Frank Reade, Jr. Has the mine caved in?"

Whitwell gave a cry of horror. The Hebrew king's face turned livid. Whitwell started to rush into the passage by which they had entered. But in that instant the volume of falling earth rolled some feet into the center of the cave.

"We are lost!" cried the king.

Frank Reade, Jr., alone was calm. But the worst had not yet come. Suddenly, alarmed cries broke from all.

The earth was settling beneath their feet. What did it mean? Gradually, but surely, it was sliding downward.

Merciful God! were they to be entombed alive in that Stygian hole? The most appalling of horror seized them.

Frank had sufficient presence of mind to seize the oil lantern before it was overwhelmed by the falling dirt.

Suddenly the commotion beneath their feet ceased. Then the left wall of the chamber seemed to melt away in a dust-like heap, and a mighty blinding light was shed into the place.

It was a strange dazzling sort of light, such as might come from internal fires, and Frank Reade, Jr.'s first horrible reflection was the volcano had again become active and the crater was reopening.

In any event it seemed as if they were all beyond earthly aid.

All fell down upon their faces with the mighty shock. Then the rumbling ceased, all was quiet, and Frank Reade, Jr., being the first to rise, beheld a wonderful sight.

A labyrinth of arches, cavern-like, were spread before his vision. These seemed to be shooting forth tongues of fire. It was a grand and most wonderful sight.

Whitwell and the Hebrew monarch were now upon their feet.

All stood for some moments spell-bound at the beautiful sight before them. It was such as human gaze had seldom, if ever, rested upon.

"What is it?" asked Whitwell in amazement. "Are we in the heart of the volcano, or the center of the earth?"

"You are partly right," replied Frank Reade, Jr., who had suddenly hit upon a solution of the matter.

"We have been let by the caving in of our chamber wall into a vast cavern under the mountain. The light which we see is produced by the chemical action of certain ingredients of the soil upon a phosphorus deposit in the rock. It is a wonderful thing truly. You can see that this internal fire gives no heat, neither does it burn."

As Frank spoke he stepped into the cavern and applied his hands to the blazing rocks.

As he had declared they gave forth no manner of heat.

It was certainly a most wonderful freak of nature's powers. A more beautiful sight could not be imagined.

One might imagine themselves in a wonderful paradise of light and brightness. Our three entombed friends gazed upon the spectacle in silent amazement.

Then Whitwell spoke:

"Well, it may be all very beautiful," he declared, "but it's not pleasant to think that one is buried alive, even here."

"Don't lose courage," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "There may be a way out of this cave. We must try and find the outlet."

"If we don't get lost in its depths. For all we may know it goes to the center of the earth."

"We should at least try it," said Frank, earnestly.

"Of course."

Without further ado, therefore, they set out to trace the depth of the cavern. For a long time they wandered on from one cavern to another, until after a time the phosphoric illuminations ceased and darkness took their place.

But fortunately Frank Reade, Jr. had possessed himself of the oil lamp.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

As the cavern now grew dark the nature of the soil and rock changed. Huge boulders were piled along at intervals, making it hard work to clamber over and around them.

In a slow and laborious manner they kept on for hours.

Then a great cry escaped Frank Reade, Jr.'s lips.

He had stepped into water, and lifting his lamp flashed the rays ahead. It was seen that they had come out upon the shores of a mammoth underground lake.

It barred their progress.

They could not go to the right or left, as the cavern walls jutted sheer down into the water.

What was to be done?

They had no means of knowing the width of this underground sea. Nor what was beyond it.

To go back and take up another passage seemed the only way. But all felt loth to do this.

"Well," ejaculated Whitwell. "Here is a fix, indeed. If we only had a boat now."

"But we have not."

"Or even the material with which to construct a raft."

"Nor that either."

"We are stumped."

"No."

Frank Reade, Jr., threw off his coat and vest. Next he removed his pants and other clothing.

"What are you going to do?" asked Whitwell, in amazement.

"I am going to swim across this lake, if possible," replied Frank. "I shall try to find out what is beyond it and you may listen for a shout from me."

"Bravo!" cried Whitwell. "Let me go in your place!"

"No," replied Frank, resolutely. "I am going alone."

With this he slid into the water of the lake. He was a good swimmer and struck out boldly.

He soon discovered that the lake had a powerful undercurrent. This suggested to him the possibility of a subterranean river.

Acting upon this theory he allowed the current to sweep him along.

As a result, he suddenly became aware of another startling fact, a strong current of air was blowing in his face.

This could mean but one thing and that was the certainty of an outlet. Frank allowed himself to drift on for some time until he was given a sudden and startling surprise.

He heard a splashing of the water just ahead of him and a dark object loomed up in the gloom.

There was just light enough for him to see that it was a boat with two occupants at the oars.

It was a thrilling surprise to Frank Reade, Jr., but he did not hesitate to shout at the top of his lungs.

The oarsman ceased rowing and answered in Hebrew. Of course, Frank could not make them understand, but it was enough for them to see him in the water.

With quick efforts they hastened to lift him into the boat, which was a commodious affair.

Of course it was difficult for Frank to make the men understand

him. But by means of signs he finally induced them to row over to the spot where he had left his companions.

Their explanations quickly followed.

It seemed that the men were Hebrew fishermen, and that the underground lake was but an extension of a larger lake outside and at the base of the Diamond Mountain.

They were in the habit of penetrating the cavern for fish, but had never gone beyond its shores.

Of course our adventurers were overjoyed to know that they were not doomed to a fearful death in the bowels of the earth.

The fishermen, as soon as they learned that the king was one of their company, were obsequious indeed, and hastened to row them back into the outer world.

Frank Reade, Jr., experienced quite a thrill of horror, when informed by the fishermen that the lake was infested with the most voracious of crocodiles, and that it was by the merest chance that he had escaped their jaws.

However, a kind fate had spared their lives, and the spirits of all arose.

The fishermen rowed them to a small hamlet near, where horses were procured, and they galloped back to the diamond mine.

When they arrived there, affairs were found to be in a fearful state.

The mine had caved in completely, and over a hundred poor fellows were buried in the alluvial drift.

Only the breaking of the wall into the other cavern had saved the lives of our friends.

It was a deliverance to be indeed thankful for.

It was no use to attempt to dig out the bodies of the buried miners. So they were left for eternity in their deep graves.

Barney and Pomp, as well as the others on board the air-ship, had believed that Frank and Whitwell were dead, and their anguish knew no bounds.

But now that by a seeming miracle they had returned, words cannot describe their joy.

Myrtle Pendennis wept with great happiness, and when Whitwell could manage it safely he took both her hands and said:

"Tell me truly, Myrtle—Miss Pendennis, I mean. Would you have cared greatly if I had lost my life in that mine?"

Tears were in the young girl's eyes, as with deep feeling she made reply:

"Yes, Mr. Whitwell, I should have cared very much. It would have filled my already brimming cup of sorrow to overflowing."

"I thank you for that expression of your regard for me," said Whitwell, with a choking voice.

From that moment there was the best of understanding between them.

Nothing further could be done at the diamond mine. The king, however, now appeared with a small leather bag in his hands.

Through Whitwell as interpreter he said:

"I have a gift for my friends from the country so far beyond the Sea of Sand. A gift for each."

He opened the bag and picked out a diamond of the size of a walnut. It was a beautiful blue and he placed it in the hand of Frank Reade, Jr. saying:

"Please accept and keep as a token of friendship."

It was a royal gift, for in America such a diamond must be worth a fortune.

The next recipient was Whitwell, who was given one almost the same in size and color. Then Myrtle came in for a smaller stone, as clear and white as could be, typical certainly of her pure character.

The others were not forgotten, handsome stones being given to Pomp and Jim Cable, but last of all the Hebrew monarch took from the bag a rarity indeed, a green diamond which he handed to Barney.

To his dying day the Hibernian would never believe that this was chance and unintentional on the king's part.

He ever averred positively that the monarch had been posted previously by Whitwell. This, however, made the stone none the less precious to him, and the laugh raised at Barney's expense over the green stone was good naturedly borne by him.

"Now," said the king turning to Whitwell. "I shall take you to our gold fields."

All were now in the best of spirits, and upon the *qui vive*. Barney set the rotascopes in motion and the air-ship was once more upon its way.

Deep down among the hills was a long level plain.

Quite a number of huts were collected in one end of this plain.

Long trenches extended in various directions. In these water flowed, and men with a method similar to the cradle and rocker used by the early California prospectors were busy extracting the precious metal from the soil.

The air-ship descended upon the plain and at once work ceased.

The miners all flocked forward to view the great wonder of the air and see these strange people from a far country and of a race of whom they had never heard before.

The king, upon this occasion invited Myrtle to accompany them.

Thus the young girl was not loth to do, as Whitwell was of the party. Barney and Pomp and Jim Cable were left aboard the air-ship.

Since the experience of some days since, it was deemed best never again to leave the air-ship by itself, or even unprotected, and in spite of the friendliness of the Hebrews, Barney and Pomp patroled the deck with loaded Winchesters.

The party under King Lodom's guidance visited the different parts of the gold field, and saw the precious mineral washed from the soil.

It was all very interesting and time passed rapidly. Indeed, it was near sunset when it was proposed to return to the air-ship.

They were at the lower end of the gold field, and just in the shadow of a vast forest.

Suddenly several of the miners sprung out of the trenches with cries of alarm.

Frank Reade, Jr., turned just in time to see what it meant.

The woods were alive with the savage Barokites. They were advancing with the wildest of yells, brandishing their weapons in a fierce manner.

It was plain to be seen that it was a surprise, and that the Barokites meant to capture the gold field.

"To the air-ship!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., excitedly. "For your lives, all!"

King Lodom's face turned deadly pale. All started at once for the air-ship.

But the warning came too late.

Frank Reade, Jr. and Whitwell sprang forward to assist Myrtle, who was with the king.

But the distance, a hundred yards, was too great, and part of the Barokites surrounded the king and the young girl.

In that moment they were made prisoners, and swept into the forest out of sight.

Whitwell was in the act of going after them in spite of the odds, but Frank Reade, Jr. held him back.

It was easy for the young inventor to see that such an act would be madness. It would only mean capture and death.

He knew that it would be far wiser to retain their liberty and seek to effect the rescue of the king and Myrtle.

Therefore, he started for the air-ship, dragging Whitwell after him.

"There is nothing to gain and everything to lose by standing our ground here!" he cried. "Come, let us get aboard the air-ship, and if we do not rescue them, we will sweep these Barokites from the face of the earth. Come on!"

Thus exhorted Whitwell could not but comply.

They were none too soon.

The air was filled with flying arrows and lances, and Whitwell was slightly wounded. Barney and Pomp saw the situation and at once opened fire upon the foe.

This enabled Whitwell and Frank to reach the ship's rail and they were pulled aboard.

The unfortunate Hebrew miners were being slaughtered by the Barokites, and the foe were making for the air-ship.

Frank knew well that it would never do to let the foe surround the ship in such overwhelming numbers.

So he hastily brought the swivel gun to bear upon the foe.

It was but a moment's work to place it in connection with the dynamos and then he pressed the key.

An electric bolt shot from the gun's muzzle and struck the earth before the advancing Barokites.

The result was terrific.

Men, rocks and dirt were hurled a hundred feet into the air. The ground actually trembled.

Again the wonderful electric gun shot forth its deadly bolt. The slaughter was terrific.

The Barokites were thousands in number, yet the electric gun mowed them down as a scythe cuts grass. Yet in their headlong valor they charged down upon the air-ship.

Frank Reade, Jr. saw that momentum would carry them to the air-ship despite the deadly work of the electric bolts, so he gave Barney the signal, and the rotascopes began to revolve and the ship arose in the air.

The first column of the Barokites had reached the air-ship rail.

But the young inventor had heavily charged the iron rail, and the electric shock hurled them back fiercely.

Up, up the air-ship went.

When fifty feet in the air, knowing that the bows and arrows of the Barokites could do no harm, Frank Reade, Jr. held the ship suspended.

Then he worked the electric gun, and before such a fearful instrument of death the Barokites could not stand.

They broke and fled wildly with frightful loss. They darted among the trees, leaving hundreds of the slain upon the battle-field.

And after them like an avenging Nemesis came the air-ship, dealing bolts of death on every hand.

Frank Reade, Jr., knew that it was possible for him to exterminate the whole Barokite nation, but he did not follow up his advantage as he might.

Bloodshed was something the young inventor had a horror of. Therefore, after effectually dispersing the foe, he ceased working the gun and devoted all time to the search for the two prisoners, Myrtle and King Lodom.

But this was ineffectual.

Darkness came and there was no favorable result. The spirits of all were much depressed.

"What shall we do?" Washington Whitwell asked, as it became too dark to further prosecute the search. "Shall we descend and camp here?"

"No, that would be dangerous," declared Frank Reade, Jr.

He was thoughtful for some moments.

"I have it," he finally cried. "We will go back to the city, and wait until morning. We can quiet the fears of the people somewhat and also be in a place of safety."

With this decision word was given Barney and he set the course of the air-ship in the direction of Menotopal.

It was not long before the air-ship had settled down upon a roof. It was the roof of a public building and almost as soon as the air-ship alighted the roof was crowded.

The people in Menotopal were in a state of fearful excitement over the loss of their king.

Armed bodies of soldiers were massing in the public squares and everywhere the most intense of excitement was the order.

The high officials of the kingdom came in a body with torch bearers to the air-ship and presented a petition to Frank Reade, Jr., to rescue their king, agreeing to pay him a princely sum for the favor.

But the young inventor made reply:

"I do not want pay for the task. I will, however, agree to do all I can to rescue the king."

Loud cheers greeted this declaration. It was evident that the Malokite nation had perfect faith in Frank Reade, Jr.'s, ability to rescue King Lodom.

Frank learned that the main headquarters or camp of the Barokites was not fifty miles distant, in the heart of a mighty range of hills.

Their position had been hitherto inaccessible to the foot soldiers of the Malokite nation.

There were deep passes which it was easy to guard, and which could not be carried on foot.

But Frank had conceived a plan of action which he now imparted to the Malokite soldiers through Whitwell as interpreter.

It was proposed to mass the entire army of the Malokite nation and march them upon the Barokite stronghold.

The air-ship would go in advance and prepare the way for the soldiers by clearing the mountain passes with the electric gun.

The proposition was gladly accepted by the Malokite soldiers, and the most active of preparations begun.

In a very short space of time the armed cohorts had formed on the plain outside the city, the vast army of twenty thousand soldiers was ready to move.

All these preparations had went on after nightfall.

Daylight was now at hand, and as the sun rose in splendor a beautiful sight was revealed and such as only our adventurers were to view in this century.

Vast columns of men bearing shields and lances and wearing glittering armor and rich plumes were marching and counter marching.

The air-ship now rose one hundred feet in the air and from its deck the sight was truly a magnificent one.

"It seems exactly as if we had been taken back eighteen centuries!" cried Whitwell. "I can hardly realize that we are not dreaming."

The start was made and all that day the army marched. Over forty miles were covered and at nightfall the mountains in which was the stronghold of the Barokites was visible.

The advance guard of the Malokite army drove in some of the pickets of the wild men and several desperate fights were made.

Wherever practicable the electric gun was used to disperse the foe, and thus the Malokites drew near to the stronghold of the Barokites.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### A DARING RESCUE.

THE Malokites camped that night in full view of the mountain pass which led to the Barokites stronghold.

The search light was put out from the air-ship and it sailed over the mountain to examine if possible the situation of the foe.

A wonderful sight was revealed.

Vast walls of rocks quarried and cut to fit closely together inclosed a wide and deep valley.

Sentinels patrolled these walls and armed bodies of the Barokites marched about in martial array.

The mountain pass was very narrow and tortuous and at intervals Martello towers were erected on the overhanging cliffs.

These towers commanded the pass and were filled with men armed with bows and long lances to be hurled down upon the heads of an invading foe.

Frank Reade, Jr. looked down into these and smiled. It was to him a very easy matter to blow these fortifications to pieces with the electric bombs.

"We will teach them a lesson and a good one," he muttered. "Ah, I have an idea."

"What?" asked Whitwell.

"Barney, lower the ship."

The order was passed to the pilot-house. Down the air ship went. The flat top of a hill was just below.

Several of the Barokite scouts had been upon this hill. But they now scampered into the bushes.

"What on earth are you going to do?" asked Whitwell, in amazement.

"Well, I'll tell you," replied Frank Reade, Jr. "I am going to try and treat with the Barokites if I can."

"Ah!"

"You see there is great danger that seeing that they are defeated they may massacre their prisoners."

"Exactly! but how are you going to treat with them?"

"I am going to capture one of those wild men and use him as a messenger to their chief or king."

Whitwell grasped the idea. He could not but see that it was excellent. He clapped his hands approvingly.

"Good!" he cried. "Strange that we did not think of that before."

Accordingly with the purpose of capturing one of the wild men, Frank Reade, Jr., caused the air-ship to descend.

Once it rested upon the ground, the wire netting was put up, and Frank Reade, Jr., Pomp and Whitwell, armed with Winchesters, left the air-ship.

The wild men had scattered in various directions, but Frank Reade, Jr., had seen one of them run into a bush near.

His plan was to surround this, and easily effect his capture.

Accordingly Whitwell and Pomp all approached from different sides. As they drew nearer they could see the fellow's eyes gleaming with terror in the bushes.

"Come out!" cried Whitwell, in Hebrew, as they drew nearer. "If you offer no resistance we will not hurt you."

As fortune had it, this representative of the Barokite tribe understood Hebrew. He hesitated but a moment.

Then he crept out trembling and ghastly pale.

He was an enormously muscular fellow, with thick bushy beard and hair, and wearing skins about him.

The prehistoric man of whom historians tell could not have been wilder nor more savage than this fellow.

"Look here, fellow," said Whitwell, sternly, "I want you to give me straight answers, now. If not, you shall die. We can annihilate your whole tribe if we chose."

"I will speak truly," replied the savage in a thick voice.

"See that you do. Where is the young girl and the Malokite king? Are they yet alive?"

The fellow hesitated.

But Whitwell's gaze was upon him, and he could not prevaricate. He was compelled to make reply:

"They are alive."

Whitwell's face lit up eagerly, and his voice trembled as he asked again:

"Ah, where are they?"

"In the underground prison," was the fellow's reply. "They cannot escape from there."

"Look here, you value your life!"

"Yes."

"It shall be spared if you will obey our commands in one respect." The savage looked at Whitwell stolidly.

"What?" he asked, tersely.

"You must take a message from us to your king. If you will do that faithfully, and return with the answer then your life shall be spared."

"I will do it," replied the Barokite.

"Well and good. Tell this to your king. If he will return King Lodom and the young lady prisoner unharmed to us here we will leave him and his people in peace. But if he does not return those prisoners we will kill him and destroy his people. We can do it with lightning from the air. Resistance will be useless, and he must comply with these terms or die."

The Barokite warrior placed one finger upon his heart and laid the other across his throat. He made other strange gestures, and replied:

"The command shall be obeyed."

"Good!" cried Whitwell. "Now begone, and return as quickly as you can."

The Barokite warrior with alacrity bounded away into the brush. Then Whitwell turned to Frank Reade, Jr.

"I suppose we must await his return," he said.

"Yes," replied the young inventor. "And we can only hope that it will be favorable."

The hours that passed were those of anxiety. Then suddenly a half naked form was seen to come bounding down over the rocks with long leaps.

It was the Barokite messenger.

He came up quickly and halting threw his head high in the air and cried in broken Hebrew:

"My king bids me decline the offer of the air walkers and bid them defiance. If they dare to invade his stronghold they shall be destroyed."

Then with a wild defiant cry the fellow sprung away into the woods again.

Here was a problem.

What should be done!

Several things were to be seriously considered. First of all, there was the danger of the massacre of the two prisoners by the revengeful Barokites should they be worsted in the battle with the Malokites.

How was this to be averted? The Barokite king would not make a treaty. It was a genuine conundrum.

"I never was so badly stuck in my life," cried Frank Reade, Jr.

"Have you an idea, Whitwell?"

"Yes," suddenly cried the millionaire traveler.

"What?"

"Let us play Indian scouts and endeavor to penetrate the enemies' prison and rescue the captives."

"Whew! that is next to impossible," cried Frank Reade, Jr.

"No."

"Why not?"

"Well, I'll elaborate my plan. It is now coming on dark. Extinguish every light aboard the air-ship about the time we let the air-ship go up."

"Then we can quietly sail over the valley and descend in some unfrequented spot within those walls of stone. You and I under cover of the darkness will get out and start for the underground prison."

Meanwhile, Barney and Pomp can make a great disturbance and draw the main body of the foe to the air-ship. He can even give them battle for awhile. This will leave the field clear for us."

It was a daring plan. To a cautious person it seemed an act of madness.

There were also glaring discrepancies in the logic of their plan. "But," exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., doubtfully, "we do not know exactly where the underground prison is."

"We must find it. At least we can make the trial. There is no doubt but that we could bring the air-ship to our aid at any moment."

Frank Reade, Jr. was not the one to hesitate in face of danger. It did not take him long to make up his mind.

"It is settled," he cried. "I am with you, Whitwell."

"Good!" cried the great traveler. "We shall succeed. I know it."

"I hope so."

Barney and Pomp were given instructions.

"Shure, an' we'll give 'em the devil's own ruction, sorr," cried Barney.

"Dat am right, Marse Frank," declared Pomp enthusiastically. "Jus' let dis chile get one shot at dem wid dat 'lectric gun. Ki yil dar won't be nuffin' lef' ob dem."

Frank carefully laid out instructions. It bid fair to be a night of inky blackness, which was favorable to their plans.

The sun was just setting. An idea occurred to Frank, and he cried:

"I have an idea that the entrance to this underground prison is marked by some sort of a bulding, a tower, or a small gate of stone. Let us take a sail over the inclosure, and by using a good glass we may be able to guess the exact spot."

"Good enough!" cried Whitwell, as he placed fresh cartridges in his Winchester. "Start the rotascope, Barney, we've no time to lose."

This was true enough. The sky was fast growing dark. Words were sent to the Malokites to stay the attack until word was sent down to them.

Then the air-ship arose and circled over the Barokite valley.

With powerful glasses Frank Reade, Jr., and Whitwell scrutinized the face of the country below.

It was seen that the most of the Barokites lived in dugouts or holes burrowed in the ground. But few stone buildings were seen, and these of the rudest description.

Large bodies of the wild men could be seen rushing about in seeming alarm at sight of the air-ship so far above them.

It was evident that the most of them lived underground. But it was no easy matter to get the exact location of the underground prison.

Several spots were selected as likely to be the right location. One of these in particular Frank Reade, Jr., felt certain was the one they were in quest of.

Immense boulders were rolled together to form a circular wall.

Under this was the yawning mouth of a cave. Beyond all doubt Frank Reade, Jr., believed this was the entrance to the prison.

Armed guards were stationed at the mouth of this cave. This was only confirmation of the belief that it was a prison.

"Upon my honor, I believe that it is the place," declared Whitwell.

"Very well, we will make it the object of our visit to-night," said Frank Reade, Jr.

"All right."

"There is a deep wood just half a mile to the east. A small clearing there gives us a good chance to descend."

"Exactly."

The air-ship now sailed over the valley and disappeared beyond the incircling mountain ranges. This was done to deceive the Barokites.

At a later hour, however, when all was gloom below, the air ship quietly floated back again and hung over the dense wood in which it was decided to descend.

All was the blackness of Egypt, when a few hours later the air ship sank slowly down in the center of the wood.

The steel netting was raised, electric alarm wires were placed about the air ship within the radius of a few hundred feet, and all preparations made to guard against a possible attack.

Then Frank Reade, Jr. and Whitwell prepared for their hazardous mission.

Armed with their Winchesters they left the air-ship and struck out into the woods.

Frank Reade, Jr. carried a coil of fine hair like steel wire which was attached to the air-ship and as they went on he unrolled it thus keeping up a connection with the air-ship.

This wire was so arranged that at a moments warning it could be attached to the dynamos by either Barney or Pomp.

In his hand Frank carried a telegraph sounder with which he could call the signal for connection.

Also in his pocket he had some heavily charged dynamite cartridges. He was ready for most any exigency.

The woods were deep and dark and Frank Reade, Jr. was constantly obliged to resort to his compass to make sure that he was going in the right direction.

The distance, however, was not great, and time brought them out in the edge of the woods and they saw the rock pile looming up before them.

A watch fire was burning at an angle of the stone wall, and armed guards could be seen pacing up and down.

To approach openly would be the height of folly and must end disastrously for our friends. But Frank Reade, Jr., was not long without an expedient.

He had the coil of wire in his hand yet.

"My idea is," he said to Whitwell, "to cause a tremendous explosion under that wall. We can blow it up, and in the fright and confusion I think we can slip into the cavern prison and rescue Myrtle and King Lodom if they are there."

"A god idea," agreed Whitwell. "But how can you manage to approach the wall without giving warning?"

"There is but one way. We must incur some little risk."

"What is it?"

"Supposing you make a circuit of the prison, then make some disturbance and draw the attention of the guards thither. I will then be able to slip up and place the cartridges under the wall."

"Good!" cried Whitwell. "I will do it."

With Whitwell to decide was to act, and he slipped away into the gloom.

Frank Reade, Jr., waited what seemed to him an interminable length of time. Then there came a tremendous crashing sound opposite.

He heard the guards utter alarmed cries, saw them leave the watch-fire.

The time for action had come.

Without a moment's hesitation he slipped out of his place of concealment and crossed the intervening space to the high wall of stone. Creeping silently forward, Frank Reade, Jr., reached the wall.

It was but a moment's work to insert the cartridges and attach the electric wire.

Then he crept back into the woods. He applied the telegraph sounder and sent the signal back to the air-ship.

Then he sank down under cover of a boulder, and awaited results.

They were not long in coming. Along the wire the electric current leaped. The next instant there was a terrific explosion.

The mighty boulders were hurled high in air, the wall was rent, the ground heaved and the Barokite guards fled for their lives.

Then Frank Reade, Jr., rushed into the breach. The electric wire was burning in contact with a heap of refuse wood. This illumined the vicinity as bright as day.

Not a Barokite was to be seen anywhere. They had all fled in terror.

But it was by no means certain but that they would return at any moment. Quick action must therefore be made.

Realizing this, Frank Reade, Jr., rushed into the mouth of the cave.

But his progress was barred by an iron barred door. At the grating, however, was Myrtle Pendennis with her white face pressed against the iron bars.

"Thank Heaven!" she cried, with the wildest joy. "You have come to rescue me, Mr. Reade?"

"Yes," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "But where is the king?"

"He is in a chamber beyond this," replied Myrtle. "But how can you break these iron bars?"

"For a moment Frank Reade, Jr., feared that he would not be able to do this. But a swift examination revealed the fact that locks were unknown to the Barokites.

While the bars could be easily shot back from the outside they could not be opened from within. Frank hastily opened the big gates and Myrtle Pendennis rushed out of the place.

At this moment Whitwell appeared in the breach.

A glad wild cry escaped his lips as he saw that Myrtle was safe.

Lovers as they were, it was a happy moment when each rushed into the arms of the other.

"You are safe, thank Heaven," cried Whitwell wildly. "I was much afraid that I had seen the last of you."

"Heaven has spared me," replied Myrtle in a choking voice. "Oh, this is great joy. But I fear we are not out of danger."

"By no means as yet," cried Whitwell. "But the king—"

"Is in an inner chamber."

Whitwell rushed to Frank Reade, Jr.'s, side.

"We have no time to lose," he cried. "Let us work quickly."

"You are right," cried Frank.

"The Barokites may return at any moment. They could overpower us easily with superior numbers."

"Yes."

Without another word both sprang into the lower part of the cavern.

Another barred door was encountered but Frank opened it full as easily as he had the other.

A man sprang out of the chamber.

It was the Hebrew king.

In terms of wildest joy he began to overwhelm his rescuers with thanks. But Whitwell cried.

"We have no time to lose. Back to the air-ship for our lives."

At this moment a piercing scream escaped the lips of Myrtle, and she came flying into the cavern.

"They have come back," she cried. "There are hundreds of them."

Myrtle's alarmed words were no exaggeration of the truth.

The cavern entrance was suddenly filled with a swarm of the savage Barokites carrying lighted torches.

CHAPTER XV.  
HOMEWARD BOUND.

THE position of our adventurers was one fraught with a mighty peril not to be expressed in words.

Death frowned upon them stern and terrible. There was no use to look for mercy to the wild men.

Down into the cave they were coming. Retreat was impossible. To fight was the only mad course left.

But such a battle could have but one ending.

Frank Reade, Jr. shivered, and Washington Whitwell cried:

"We are lost."

He threw an arm about Myrtle's waist and rejoined:

"We will die together."

But at the eleventh hour Frank Reade, Jr. remembered the coil of wire which he had brought into the cavern with him.

It connected with the air-ship. To think was to act.

With the telegraph clicker attached, he sent the following startling message to Barney on the air-ship:

"We are caged here in the cave. Come with the air-ship at once. Follow wire and throw out search light. For the love of God, come quickly."

He knew that the message had been received by Barney.

There was a forlorn hope that help would arrive before they were overpowered by the Barokites.

King Lodom seized a war club and stood ready for the battle.

But Frank Reade, Jr., and Whitwell knew that the Winchesters were all that could be depended upon, and accordingly held them in readiness.

"Don't fire too soon," said Frank Reade, Jr. "And give them the bullets just as fast as you can pull the trigger."

"Ay—ay!" replied Whitwell.

The next moment the rattling fire began. Bang—bang—bang! went the repeating rifles.

Every shot told and brought down a man. It was a fearful slaughter, as the Barokites were but a few paces distant.

But they seemed reckless of life and determined to carry the day at any cost. They pressed on with wild yells and shrieks.

Of course the thing must speedily have an end.

As soon as the cartridges were exhausted our brave defenders of the cave must perforce to be overcome by weight of numbers. It was fearful to contemplate.

But fate had not in store for them such a fearful death.

Suddenly there was a terrific roar and a shock at the mouth of the cave.

A great light shone into the place, and wild yells of dismay and terror escaped the wild men.

"Saved, thank God!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., wildly. "It is the air-ship."

This was indeed the truth, and they were saved by a miracle. The light which penetrated the cavern was that of the air-ship search light.

The electric gun worked by Barney, dispersed the Barokites like sheep.

The cavern was quickly cleared, and now Whitwell and Myrtle with Frank Reade, Jr., and King Lodom, walked out of the place and hastened aboard the air-ship.

The delight of those on board was beyond measure.

"Begorra, sir!" cried Barney, as he wrung Frank's hand. "We wuz that afeerd that we had lost yez that we didn't know what to do. St. Pether be praised, it's safe ye are."

Pomp danced a break-down and Jim Cable a hornpipe. Then a new peril presented itself.

The Barokites had rallied and were advancing to attack the air-ship.

Barney laughed scornfully and stepped along to the electric gun.

"Shall I give 'em a taste, Mistor Frank?" he asked. "Whurroo! I cu'd swape 'em off av the earth."

"No," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "There is no use in taking human life now. We have rescued the prisoners, now let us go back to Menotopal."

"Ah!" exclaimed Whitwell. "What of the Malokite army?"

"Let them march back," replied Frank.

"Then you will make no attack on the Barokites?"

"No, we have gained our purpose. They have been taught a good lesson. Now let them alone. I do not like war, anyway. Start the rotascopes, Barney."

Nobody could demur. Frank Reade, Jr. was right. Even King Lodom felt that the Barokites had been sufficiently intimidated.

So the air-ship mounted heavenward.

By aid of the search light the course out of the valley was set. Soon they were hovering over the plain where the Malokite army was encamped.

It was easy to descend. The soldiers sleeping on their arms were aroused and a tremendous excitement was the result.

Their joy was great to know that their king had been rescued.

But the orders to march home without a battle were not very enthusiastically received.

With early daybreak however, the start was made.

The air-ship reached Menotopal by early noon of course far in advance of the soldiers.

King Lodom descended in safety and greeted the wildly cheering populace. Those on board the air-ship owned the city that day. The gratitude of the Malokites was manifested in an abundant manner.

Many costly gifts were brought to those on board the air-ship.

Gold and silver ornaments and rich wines, costly tapestries and curios of inestimable value. It was all very gratifying, indeed, to our friends to receive these beautiful gifts.

Several days the air-ship remained in Menotopal, and then Frank Reade, Jr., one morning appeared on deck and said to Barney and Pomp:

"Get everything ship-shape and ready for a return home."

"Home!" gasped Washington Whitwell. "Do you mean it, Mr. Reade?"

"By all means, if you have accomplished all the research you desire."

"I may say that I have," replied Whitwell. "At least so far as this land of the Malokites is concerned. But—"

"Well, what?"

"If it would not be too much to ask, I would really like to inspect more closely that marvel of nature, the Sea of Sand."

"You shall have the privilege," declared Frank Reade, Jr. "Barney and Pomp, how do you feel about going home?"

The two faithful members of the air-ship's crew threw up their hats and cheered.

"Dat jes strikes dis nigger right, Marse Frank," cried Pomp. "I done been away from mah Readestown gal long nuff so she'll be jes glad to see me."

"Whurroo! Oi'll be glad to see the ould town onct'more," cried Barney. "It's glad I am to go on a trip in the air ship, an' glad I am to git back agin."

"Then it is settled," declared Frank. "We will leave this very day, Miss Pendennis, of course you will be glad to get back to America?"

"Indeed I shall!" cried Myrtle, joyfully. "I shall go to my friends in Chicago."

Preparations were made to start at once.

It was not deemed best to say very much to the people of the city about it for various reasons.

But just before the start Frank Reade, Jr., sent word to the king that they were to leave.

The result was that the Hebrew monarch with his retinue came hastily down to the air ship.

There were tears in the old man's eyes, and he addressed Whitwell:

"I would be happy if only you would consent to remain subjects of mine," he cried. "All that I have is at your disposal. We would not fear our enemies."

"We thank you for your kind offer," rejoined Whitwell, politely.

"But Mr. Frank Reade, Jr., owns the air-ship and he is a very wealthy man, and would consider it no inducement whatever to remain here."

"Ah!" said the King, sadly. "I suppose the hearts of the air-dwellers turn to their people. I can say no more. Farewell!"

He took the hand of Frank Reade, Jr., and of Whitwell. Then he turned regretfully away and left the air-ship.

Indeed, the whole nation of the Malokites seemed disappointed to think that the "air-dwellers" were to leave.

The more ignorant of the people conceived the idea of compelling them to remain.

A scheme was put afoot to do this. It was planned to hold the air-ship down and make prisoners of Frank Reade, Jr., and his companions.

But it was this very exigency that had been foreseen by the young inventor and this was why he had taken care to get all in readiness for a sudden start.

So the air-ship was all ready for the start. The mob was formed in the nearest square, and they made a start for the air-ship before the soldiers of the King's guards could even imagine what was wrong.

But Frank Reade, Jr., saw them coming and quickly gave the word to Barney.

The rotascopes were set in motion and the air ship rose rapidly into the air. In a few seconds it was far above the reach of the baffled mob.

Up the air ship went.

All on board took a last look at Menotopal and then a course was set to the northward.

Homeward bound! What magic there was in that word.

To even the most ardent explorer after years of wanderings, the mention of home brings a flood of thrilling emotions.

Over the Malokite country the air-ship passed swiftly and soon hovered over the wilderness contiguous to the Sea of Sand.

The routine of everyday duties had been taken up on board the air ship by Barney and Pomp, and their spirits were high in anticipation of the honors with which they would be greeted when America was reached.

"Shure an' we'll shake hands with the President of the United States," cried Barney, pompously. "Mistor O'Shea the frind of the poor and the lineal descendant av the ould Irish kings. Bedad it's fit oil be to figger in the sassiety av the four hundred."

"Hoo dar, yo' monkey-mugged l'ish loofah," sneered Pomp. "Does yo' tink yo' am gwine to be de bigges' man in America? Humph! I reckon dey don't set no heaps by de l'ish dar ef yo' only knowed it, ma' friend. Take a tumble to yo'sef."

"Shut up, you ebonzied chump yer! Begorra, I'll put me fist troo yer shinyeye if yer insult me agin. Bejabbers they'd use ye for a foot-stool in ther sassiety I goes wid in New Yorruk. So they wud!"

"Don' yo' 'sult me, l'ish."

"O'll insult ye," gritted Barney, making a pass at Pomp with his fist. "Begorra, I'll spile yer beauty, that I will."

But Pomp ducked his head and received the pass full on that hard part of his anatomy.

As a result Barney nigh broke his knuckles and Pomp grinned with delight.

"Ki yi! Try it agin, I'ish!" he cried.

This infuriated Barney, and he grabbed a small camp stool in one hand and made a rush at the dorky. Pomp dodged, and lowering his head butted his antagonist in the stomach.

Barney went down, with the wind completely knocked out of him. But Pomp came to grief as well. His feet slipped and he sprawled upon the deck over Barney.

It chanced that Jim Cable was just coming out of the cabin with a hot bucket of water with which he intended to wash some grease from his hands.

The water was at boiling point. As luck had it Pomp struck Jim and sent his feet from under him.

Jim sat down very suddenly and the water went over full upon Pomp's wool. The effect can be better imagined than described.

As the hot fluid literally parboiled his scalp in places, a yell which would have done credit to a North American Indian escaped Pomp's lips.

"Fo' de Lor' I'se killed, I'se dead," he shrieked. "Oh, ow—ow! de Lor' help me! I'se done biled to deff."

He danced a vigorous shuffle on the deck and screamed wildly with pain. At this juncture Frank Reade, Jr., came on deck.

And poor Barney actually plucked small bits of loose wool from his head which had been raised by the action of the hot water.

But the first spasm of pain over Pomp became calmer.

The sight of Frank Reade, Jr., who he knew disapproved of their skylarking, had a magical effect upon him, and he braced right up.

"What is up?" asked the young inventor feigning sternness, though he was choking with inner laughter. "What on earth is the matter?"

"Nuffin, Marse Frank," spluttered Pomp. "Yes, dar is too. Dat is—I say—well, I'se jis a bit hurted, dat's all."

"I say Begorra, it's good enough for ye, ye blatherskite," exploded Barney, gaining his feet. "That blow ye give me wid yer head nigh kill me utterly."

Pomp forgot his pain and danced up to Barney swinging his arms. "Now yo' jes beg my parding, yo' I'ish loofah, or I'll jes break yo' head fo' yo'," cried the sable gentlemen excitedly. "Pon' ma word, yo' am de' meanest fellah I eber did see."

"Go way, naygur," said Barney with bravado. "Yez don't want to pick a fuss wi' me. Shure an' ye'd git the wust maulin' iver ye got."

"Enough of this," said Frank Reade, Jr., with sternness.

This settled the feud instantaneously, and the two skylarkers went off about their duties. Barney into the pilot house and Pomp to do up in bandages his wounded head.

The air ship kept a straight course for another day. Thus far all had been smooth, but now quite an unlooked for and astonishing incident occurred.

With all the marvels which they had encountered in this part of the world this quite eclipsed everything.

Whitwell was upon the fore deck talking with Myrtle; Barney and Pomp were in the pilot-house. Jim Cable was dozing in the shadow of an awning and Frank Reade, Jr., was pacing the deck at the time.

Suddenly a dull rumbling sound was heard, and the air ship seemed caught in a terrific gust of wind which whirled it about like a top.

Frank Reade, Jr., was thrown from his feet.

Whitwell was just in time to prevent Myrtle from being hurled over the air ship's rail.

"What in the world was that?" cried Frank Reade, Jr., as he regained his feet.

Thinking it was a hurricane he would have sprung to the engine room to set the rotoscopes going faster, but Cable arrested him with a sharp cry.

The ex-sailor was leaning over the rail and gazing down upon the face of the country below.

As the air ship was now resting quite easy, Frank sprang to the rail and also gazed down.

Quite a thrilling sight met his gaze. The ground below was heaving and tossing like the billows of the sea.

Whole forests were leveled, great chasms were rent in the earth and all was commotion and destruction.

Hundreds of wild animals could be seen running hither and thither in an agony of fear.

Lions, tigers and elephants were mingled with wild horses, buffaloes, cows and goats. It was a curious medley of animal life, each eager for safety.

Heavens! how the sky rumbled and the earth heaved and tossed.

"An earthquake!" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr.

"It is awful!" cried Jim Cable.

"Look yonder," shouted Whitwell. "See that mountain."

All gazed in the direction indicated.

It was a wonderful spectacle indeed which they beheld.

The mountain—a peak fully four thousand feet high—was rent in twain like an apple cut with a knife.

A gorge thousands of feet deep was in an instant cut through the mountain.

Pen cannot adequately depict the wonderful sight. It was beyond comprehension.

It seemed to the spectators as if the world was assuredly going to pieces.

"Shure, the earth is going to collapse!" cried Barney wildly. "It's lucky for us we're in the air now, to be shure."

The earth trembled and rolled and heaved.

Of course the earthquake was over in a very few minutes, but it left its mark indelibly upon the face of the country.

Suddenly an alarmed cry burst from Barney.

"Begorra, it's sinkin' we are!"

This was the truth.

Frank Reade, Jr., sprang to the engine-room. He touched the rotate key, but they refused to revolve faster.

The horror of the thing burst upon him. The gearing was out of fix, and the air-ship was sure to fall from that dizzy height.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE EARTHQUAKE.

For a moment Frank Reade, Jr., feared the worst, and that the air-ship was about to be dashed to the earth violently.

But fortunately the trouble with the gearing was simply a clogging up of some of the cogs and the rotascopes continued to yet revolve swiftly enough to allow the air-ship to settle gradually.

But the earthquake was over before the air-ship struck the earth.

Yet our adventurers found themselves in the midst of a scene of the wildest desolation and destruction.

Great fissures rent the earth in different directions, and these were many feet deep.

The air-ship had settled near the edge of one of these. On the other hand was a dismantled forest, the trees many of them being uprooted.

In this forest among the wreck many wild animals had sought refuge.

They were visible from the deck of the air-ship, and the sight at once excited the cupidity of Barney and Pomp.

They asked Frank Reade, Jr., for permission to go out and bag some of the game which was so easily within their reach.

There was no way that the young inventor could reasonably refuse them, so he at once gave his consent.

Armed with their Winchesters, Barney and Pomp left the air-ship. Both were jubilant with the prospect before them of bagging some big game.

A wild hare scampered past, but Barney ignored the chance.

"Shure, it's big game I'm after," he cried. "I promised me cousin in Ameriky that I'd fetch home a lion skin for her, and be-jabbers that's phwat I intend to do."

"Golly, ef yo' wuz to sight a lion, Mister O'Shea, I done think yo'd jest turn tail and run for yo' life. Dat's a fac'!"

"Begorra, that wud be yure thrick, naygur. But divil an Irishman did ye iver see turn back from a lion. See how me glorious fellow countrymen in New York twist the lion's tail whin England puts her fut on the neck av poor sufferin' ould Ireland."

"I jes' tinks yo'll find quite a diffrence atween de lions ob dis yer part an' de British lion," rejoined Pomp, with a laugh. "Dat am my pinyun."

"Humph!" sniffed Barney contemptuously. "Yure opinion ain't wuth that, ye naygur. Whurroo! What war that?"

A tremendous roar which almost made the ground tremble came from the woods. Barney turned pale and clutched his Winchester.

The more cautious Pomp started to run.

"Declar for goodness it am a lion!" he cried. "Look out fo' yo'self, Mister O'Shea."

Now, the truth was, Barney was really no coward. He had just made a vain-glorious boast.

But that did not matter. He was determined to stand his ground in spite of the lion. His Irish sense of conceit and bravado had quite overcome his powers of discretion.

So he held the Winchester at his shoulder ready for use.

He had not long to wait.

Suddenly there was a crashing sound in the underbrush, and over a huge log bounded a mighty specimen of the genuine African lion.

He was a magnificent fellow as he stood lashing his tail and glaring defiance at poor Barney, who already felt that he was in for more than he had bargained for.

"Fo' goodness sake, Barney, come away," cried Pomp, wildly. "Don' go fo' to stan' dar any longer."

But Barney's reply was to fling the rifle to his shoulder and take steady aim at the king of beasts.

Bang!

The rifle exploded and the bullet hit the mark. The lion recoiled, gave a roar of pain and looked about him as if to see his opponent at such proximity. Barney once more aimed and fired.

This time the bullet merely glanced along the beast's skull and drew a fresh roar of pain from him.

"Whurroo! I'll bring the baste this toime, or me name is Dinnis," cried Barney, as he drew aim again.

But this time the lion reached the conclusion that it was Barney who was inflicting the stinging wounds upon him in such a mysterious fashion.

At any rate he made up his mind to an attack and came leaping forward like a thunderbolt.

Barney drew a short quick breath. He felt that the time for action had come; the crisis was at hand.

He wisely held his fire until the lion was close upon him, then he pulled the trigger with great quickness.

There was a flash and a report. Then the lion's paw struck Barney over the right ear.

He dropped insensible. The lion stood over him, making the welkin tremble with his fierce roar.

One huge paw was upon Barney's shoulder, the animal's hot breath fanned his cheeks, and death hovered over him.

One crunch of those massive jaws, one blow of the paw and Barney's fate would be sealed.

Seeing his friend's awful position, Pomp gave a wild cry of terror.

For a moment he was in a quandary what to do.

The impulse had been upon him to run back to the air-ship for help, but he reflected that this would be folly, for before he could return Barney would no doubt have fallen a victim to the lion's rage.

There was but one daring chance to take.

Pomp knew what this was. He was no coward, but at times a little over prudent. Now, however, he was as courageous as if upon a field of battle.

"Dat am de only way," he muttered. "I'll jes risk it. Dat lion kain't no more'n kill dis chile, dat am sartin. So here goes."

He drew aim slowly and carefully with the rifle.

He took good care to single out the animal's eye and then he pulled the trigger.

There was a sharp report, a fearful roar from the lion.

The king of beasts gave a mighty leap in the air and sprang toward Pomp. But he fell in a headlong heap and lay an inert mass not twelve feet distant.

All Pomp's fear was gone now.

It was succeeded by an overmastering sense of triumph which he could not help but vent in a loud yell.

"Whooray!" he shouted. "Ise done gone an' did it. Fo' massy's sake I'se killed de lion an' sated Barney. Whoop! Marse Frank! all ob ye. Come quick."

Pomp, steering clear of the dead lion, sprang to Barney's side. But the Hibernian was already recovering, and had but just opened his eyes.

"Praise Hebben, yo' am safe, Barney," cried Pomp, wildly. "Dat am de bes' ob luck. I killed de lion, or yo' wud hab been a dead man."

Barney slowly collected his scattered senses and sat up. He looked steadily at the dead lion and then at Pomp.

"Bedad, give us the truth now, naygur. Wuz it ye or me what killed the lion?"

"It was Pomp," cried a voice behind them. "And you can thank your stars for it, you reckless Irishman."

It was Frank Reade, Jr., who accompanied by Whitwell had come out to learn the meaning of the shots.

They had seen Pomp's plucky work and realized at once the deadly peril from which Barney had been released.

The lion was a monster and his skin well worth preserving.

Barney had sufficient experience in lion hunting for one day, and after thanking Pomp for the service done him, said:

"Be jabbers, which one av us owns the skin? Is it yesilf or me, naygur? I shot him an' you kilt him."

"Sho! I doesn't want de skin, I'ish. Take it yo'self," said Pomp generously. "I hab no bes' gal at home as yo' hab."

After this the two eccentric characters, for such they certainly were, sat down and in the best of humor began to strip the lion of his skin.

They were good friends for the rest of the day.

Frank Reade, Jr., with Cable's help, had been at work on the gearing of the air-ship and now had the rotascopes once more in free working order.

It was decided to spend another day where they were, for the purpose of looking over the territory made desolate by the earthquake.

A visit was paid to the mountain which had been cleft so wonderfully in half, and wonderful sights and proofs of nature's forces were there revealed.

Whitwell made some valuable data for his proposed book, and then a return was made to the air-ship.

It was decided not to stop again until upon the verge of the Sea of Sand.

Once more the air-ship ascended and took her northward flight.

Before another day the mighty expanse of the Sea of Sand was spread before them.

It was a scene of great contrast to that which they had just been witnessing. The mighty waste of white sand was most desolate in appearance compared to the luxuriant forests and broad, fertile plains over which they had just passed.

Selecting a good spot on the verge of the strange sea the air-ship was allowed to descend and rested upon the ground.

A half mile distant were the shores of the sea. Beyond it was the Sahara. Frank Reade, Jr., had for several reasons decided to land upon the southern shore.

As soon as the air-ship rested upon the ground as was customary the steel netting was run up over the deck. Then armed and ready for any possible emergency, Frank Reade, Jr., and Whitwell opened the steel door and stepped from the deck.

A long and barren stretch of sand was between them and the vast expanse of quicksand.

They proceeded to cross this with great caution, for it was not easy to discern exactly where the treacherous sea began.

But finally they stood within a few feet of the jelly like mass. Indeed, Whitwell managed, crawling upon his belly to the verge, to get a small jar filled with the curious sand.

Held in the hand it seemed like quicksilver in its motion. Some curious gelatinous substance held the sands together.

"Well, that beats me," muttered the millionaire traveler. "Well, I shall have these sands analyzed. At first I thought that a deposit of alkali might lie under them. But I am convinced that I was mistaken."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr. "What is your idea now?"

"I am not prepared to say," replied Whitwell. "I must first make an analysis."

He gave a sudden sharp exclamation. In the particles of sand he had found something. He held it up to view.

It was a small shell fish of the snail order. To Frank Reade, Jr., this was no surprising discovery. To Whitwell, however, it meant a great deal.

"I see it," replied Frank, tersely. "It is a snail. What of it?"

"A good deal," replied Whitwell. "It means that the Sea of Sand contains animal life."

"Is that wonderful?"

"Listen. You can travel the great Sahara over and you will never even find a fly in existence. Its sands are without life. They can not support life. But if in this quicksand shell-fish are found, it clearly establishes the fact that animal life finds a home there."

"Well, and what of it?" asked Frank, with little interest.

"What of it? A good deal. Perhaps creatures new to natural history may exist in the Sea of Sand."

"That is a visionary idea, I fear."

"Well, allow it to be so for the present," said Whitwell with a laugh. "Now let us take a look at the feasibility of establishing some sort of a communicating link between this country and the civilized world."

"A bridge, for instance," rejoined Frank Reade, Jr., satirically.

"Don't make light of the matter," said Whitwell, coolly. "This is an age of wonders, you know. If not a bridge, some other means will be devised, I know."

"Why not a ship, a ferry boat?"

"An air ship could do it. But there is only one in existence, and you have the secret of its construction."

"I would give up the secret gladly if I thought it would be a solution to the great problem."

"But why not?"

"No."

"The air ship could carry them across and back again."

"Yes, but you have not stopped to think of the interminable distance across the Sahara from here."

"Pshaw! That could be overcome."

"Undoubtedly, but this desertland is in the hands of a ruthless class of people, the Bedouins. As long as they reign supreme here nothing of that kind can ever be done. This lost nation cannot be made an American province. That would be impossible."

"Do you believe it?"

"I do."

"At all events," rejoined Whitwell, "it will be greatly to our credit that we have discovered and made known to the world the existence of this country."

"Undoubtedly," replied Frank. "But will you be content with that?"

"I shall have to be," replied Whitwell, philosophically. "But on the whole I cannot see how we can accomplish the necessary survey alone."

"Nor I."

"I think we had better first secure an able corps of American engineers—"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., testily. "We can never hope to link this lost nation with our people in this generation, or at least so long as the Turks hold Palestine and the main country of the East."

"Indeed, it would be a fatal thing for us to attempt. Even were the Malokites enabled to cross to the Sahara, and a method of crossing the Sea of Sand discovered, their ruin would be almost assured."

"How so?" asked Whitwell, in surprise.

"Easy enough. The Khedive would send a conquering army down here and make all this country subject to his dominion. The Malokites could not help being slaughtered, for their weapons are as nothing compared with the modern engines of warfare."

"You are right," cried Whitwell, with inspiration. "You have spoken wisely."

"We could deal the Malokites no more deadly blow."

"That settles it. At least we have had the satisfaction and the honor of being the first in this century to visit the lost people."

"Yes."

"With that we may then content ourselves. I am satisfied."

Whitwell turned his face toward the air-ship. They soon reached it and went on board. Orders were given Barney to start, and soon the air-ship was sailing far above the wonderful Sea of Sand.

It was not so difficult now to see where the sea ended and the desert began.

Suddenly, as Frank Reade, Jr., was in the bow scrutinizing the distant line a sharp cry escaped his lips.

A dark object was upon the horizon. It was not difficult for him to see what it was at a glance.

It was a caravan and heading directly toward the treacherous Sea of Sand. That they were unsuspecting of its presence and the horrible fate which lay before them the young inventor felt sure.

There were no doubt hundreds of lives in the caravan which would thus be sacrificed.

Frank Reade, Jr., as this reflection came over him experienced a thrill of horror.

With an exclamation he beckoned to Washington Whitwell.

"See!" he cried excitedly. "Is not that a caravan heading this way?"

"It is," replied Whitwell.

At the same moment the same idea which had occurred to Frank now presented itself forcibly to him.

"My soul!" he gasped. "They are marching on to their death."

"Exactly!"

"In a short while they will walk unsuspectingly into the Sea of Sand and be engulfed in its depths."

"That is what I feared."

"Horrible! It is within our power to avert the fearful tragedy and we must do it," cried Whitwell excitedly.

"Yes."

"Have we time?"

"We must have time. Barney, let the propeller work its fastest." cried Frank Reade, Jr., excitedly.

Barney had overheard and comprehended their words.

He needed no second bidding and sprung to the engine room.

In a short while the air-ship was speeding at her utmost. Nearer the caravan drew every moment.

Now the camels and their high packed loads of rich goods could be plainly identified.

A cavalcade of armed horsemen rode in advance. It was a strongly guarded train and evidently composed of merchants of great wealth.

At sight of the air-ship the caravan did not halt, but, instead, the horsemen waved their scimiters and made defiant gestures to those on board.

They were now perilously near to the treacherous gulf of quicksand.

"Quick! there's no time to lose," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "Lower the ship."

Barney checked the propeller and the rotascopes. The ship sank rapidly and soon rested upon the sands of the desert.

In an instant the armed horsemen were about them like a cloud. Their attitude was menacing so Frank cried:

Run up the steel netting. We must take no chances."

This was done and the cavalcade halted about one hundred yards distant. One of their number with a white flag now rode forward.

He was a tall, swarthy Moslem dressed richly and carrying a jangling sword. He approached in a haughty manner and spoke in French.

"What want the flying men with the caravan of the great Ali Kaden?"

"We wish to give you warning of a great danger," cried Frank answering in French.

"Danger?"

"Yes, a mighty peril, by which you and your caravan may be swept from sight forever, lies before you."

The bearer of the truce seemed much astonished, and replied:

"What do you mean? The even desert is before us."

"So it may seem to you," declared Frank, warningly. "But know for a living truth that not one hundred yards distant is a mighty quicksand. To walk into it will mean death to you."

The emissary turned and swept the plain with his gaze.

There was nothing in the unbroken expanse to warrant the declaration of Frank Reade, Jr. It was evident that the Moslem discredited the statement of Frank Reade, Jr., for his lip curled disdainfully and his eyes flashed incredulously.

"I see nothing," he said, scornfully. "The desert is the same."

"So it is to the eye," replied Frank, earnestly. "But if you should ride one hundred yards further you would sink out of sight in a vast quicksand."

The Moslem tapped the pommel of his saddle a moment, then he turned and made a sweeping gesture to others in the cavalcade.

Four of them rode forward, led by a tall, haughty Turk, whose hawk-like nose and keen eyes were evidence of his nationality.

"This is Ali Kaden, the mighty Sheik," said the emissary, with a sweeping bow. "You may tell him of your fabled quicksand."

"Well, upon my soul," muttered Frank, angrily. "I never saw such a bigoted, ignorant set before in my life. They doubt my word."

However, he undertook to explain matters to Ali Kaden.

The Moslem noble listened carelessly, and then unsheathing his scimeter, cried:

"The eyes of Ali Kaden do not deceive him. No fable will turn the course of his caravan aside. You have come from the Bedouins doubtless to prevent our reaching the southern countries, but we are not fools. By Allah! I will prove your words a lie."

Ali Kaden struck spurs to his Arabian steed. Four others followed him in a mad circle over the plain.

A warning cry escaped all on board the air ship.

Ali Kaden's bigotry was destined to meet with proper punishment. Of course there was no power that our adventurers could exert now to restrain the foolhardy Moslem Sheik.

The next moment a fearful spectacle was witnessed.

The five horsemen suddenly were floundering in the treacherous sands. Only an instant were they visible, then sank from sight.

Their fate was sealed forever.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE END.

THE Sea of Sand never gave up its dead. Ali Kaden and his foolhardy followers would never ride the desert more.

A great cry went up from those in the caravan.

This was succeeded by a profound silence, which was, no doubt, the offspring of the fearful horror which oppressed all.

"My soul!" gasped Washington Whitwell. "That is the end of those poor fools."

"They are the victims of their own folly," rejoined Frank Reade, Jr.

"It is a sharp lesson for 'em," muttered Jim Cable. "When one don't give heed to a warnin' of rocks ahead, they must expect to get stranded on a lee shore."

The Moslems in the caravan were gazing spellbound at the spot in the plain where their leaders had disappeared so mysteriously.

Then the tall emissary waved his sword and addressed the cavalcade in the Moslem tongue.

The result was that the horsemen broke away in a gallop to the rear of the train.

There they seemed to hold a confab.

Then, just as Frank was about to give the order to Barney to raise the air-ship, a single horseman galloped up.

He reined in his horse not twenty feet distant, and spoke in French.

"Will the sorcerer of the air not restore the sheik to his people?" asked the fellow in a threatening way. "If he does not, we will destroy him and his air-ship."

"Tell your companions," said Frank, sternly, "that we are not sorcerers and that we merely wished to do you all a service. Had your sheik heeded our warning, he would not be now at the bottom of that quicksand. This is all I have to say. It is not in my power to restore your sheik."

"Then we will destroy your ship," asserted the fellow threateningly.

"I'll tell you this much," declared the young inventor forcibly. "You are all a pack of idiots, and if you don't clear out and go about your business, I'll blow you all into eternity."

With an angry cry the fellow wheeled his horse and rode back to the caravan. The message he brought was evidently not a pleasant one to those of his companions, for loud cries of defiance came from them.

"Come, Barney," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "Set the rotascopes going. If we don't get out of here pretty quick we will surely get into a scrimmage with those fools."

"They will all perish in the Sea of Sand," declared Whitwell.

"Well, let them. We have given them fair warning."

Barney, however, found that the machinery was a trifle out of order and that it would take some minutes to set the rotascopes going.

This delay brought on the crisis. A volley of rifle balls came from the caravan.

So far from believing those on the air ship their friends, the ignorant Turks believed them their foes and sorcerers. In view of all this a collision could not be averted.

The rifle balls whistled through the steel netting and came perilously near wounding all.

"Quick! seek cover for your lives," cried Frank Reade, Jr., springing into the pilot house.

The others needed no second bidding. The Moslems were coming like a thunder cloud upon their fleet Arabian coursers. Their scimiters flashed in air, a wild hurrah broke from their lips and they presented a truly formidable appearance.

But Frank Reade, Jr., touched a button, which caused some arms to fly out from the side of the ship supporting long bars of steel.

These were heavily charged with electricity, and were a special invention of his for the repelling of just such an attack as this.

On came the cavalcade.

It was certainly their purpose to ride down upon and try to crush the air-ship.

But the moment the first horse touched the steel bars there was a tremendous concussion, a long line of blue fire leaped into the air, and horse and rider were hurled back as by giant hands.

The rider behind fell over this one, the third was piled on top of him. Wherever horse or man came in contact with the air-ship they were hurled back with frightful force.

The repulse was a most fearful one. Not a whole battery of guns could have equaled it.

Men and horses struck dead as by a lightning bolt from Heaven lay in windrows. The cavalcade was effectually repulsed.

Then Barney got the gearing clear, the rotascopes revolved and the air-ship ascended. Up she went.

Over the scene of carnage the air-ship was suspended. All rushed out upon deck and gazed down.

The caravan was badly demoralized. A part of it went forward and the next moment was engulfed in the quicksand.

This seemed to give the others a clear view of the case, and they drew back.

"At last they have hit upon the truth," cried Frank Reade, Jr. "They will understand now that we were friends instead of foes. It took them a good while to see it, and cost them dear."

"True," declared Washington Whitwell. "And now I can understand the wisdom of your proposition not to open up communication with the lost people. The Malokites would indeed be cursed with such an ignorant bigoted race as this for conquerors and oppressors."

"Yes," said Frank Reade, Jr., with conviction. "There will be no

future for the Orient until Turkish rule has been broken. Some time, perhaps, a European power, the English, perhaps, may gain supremacy here. Then and then only will it be safe for the lost people to seek intercourse with the outside world."

"I am assured that you are right."

Leaving the Sea of Sand behind them, the air-ship was held on her course for the Mediterranean.

Some days later she was crossing it to the southern shores of France.

No stop was made, for Frank Reade, Jr., was desirous to return at once to Readestown. England and Scotland were passed over and the long flight across the Atlantic began.

When the shores of America hove in view one fine morning all gave a patriotic cheer.

"The best country on earth!" cried Washington Whitwell. "Truly the land of the free and the home of the brave. I am proud to say that I am an American."

The two thousand miles from the seaboard to Readestown was made without incident. When the air-ship arrived above the little Iowa city the people flocked out in great numbers and with surprise, for the return had been unheralded.

But they were none the less glad to see the young inventor and his companions. The first to fall into the arms of Frank Reade, Jr. was his dear wife. His father came next with tears in his eyes, and a short while later Frank was in his own home trotting his little boy upon his knee, and participating once more in domestic joys.

His wonderful journey to the Sea of Sand had reached a propitious ending.

Washington Whitwell at once began work on his scientific work regarding the lost people of Central Africa. But before he plunged deeply into it, an interesting ceremony was performed which made him a happy man for life.

In the Readestown church he led to the altar, for better or for worse, Myrtle Pendennis. They are now happy man and wife.

Jim Cable had formed such an attachment to Frank Reade, Jr., that he accepted a position in his machine shops. Barney and Pomp returned to their prosaic home duties, but not one of the party are likely in the course of their lives, to forget the most thrilling incidents connected with that wonderful journey to the Sea of Sand.

[THE END.]

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